Going Green in Dental

Organization:
Neighborcare Health, Seattle, WA

Summary:
What and Why:
The “Going Green in Dental” initiative is meant to increase recycling and create and promote sustainable green practices across dental sites. This initiative addresses the need for social responsibility to the environment and helps meet new recycling regulations set by the city of Seattle.

Project goals:
- Increase the number of currently used items we recycle by working with our Waste Management Representative.
- Increase knowledge and awareness of staff on what is or is not recyclable.
- Assign a “green rating” to the top dental procedures in our practices.
- Increase the percent of reusable or recyclable items by working with our supply representatives to identify greener alternatives.
- Comply with the new City of Seattle recycling requirements for businesses.
- To achieve an average “green rating” of 70% or above.

How:
Recycling:
- Walkthroughs of sites to assess what is being recycled.
- Walkthrough with Waste Management Representative to assess what can be recycled.
- Visual and verbal communication to staff on what they should be recycling and how.
- Provide the necessary recycling bins.

Greener Ordering Practices:
- We looked at our order history and did observations at our dental clinics to determine the numbers of disposable and non-recyclable items being used.
- We shared this list with our lead dental assistants and our Henry Schein representative so that we could find reusable alternatives for those items.
- We scheduled a workshop with lead dental assistants, a dentist, and the Henry Schein representative to look at alternative items and decide which items we wanted to test.
- We assigned each site to test a number of items and report back on whether or not they would work for our sites.
- We planned implementation for all sites for items that were approved by leads.

Cost:
Our organization did not incur any additional expenses to run this program because the only added resource used was a process improvement specialist from our process improvement team. Once “Going
Green” was chosen as a process improvement project, it was incorporated into the other projects already being worked on by the team.

**Project Results and Benefits:**
- Increase in staff awareness of what can and cannot be recycled.
- Increased the number of items that are recycled to more than 4.

Although we were not able to reach a 70% green rating for now, a recent check-in has shown that the staff does recognize the effort to go green as ongoing, and they are still finding alternatives to disposable items on their own and sharing this information with other sites.

**Lessons Learned:**
- Dental practices can work with their waste management representative and supply representative to identify opportunities in their current practice.
- Following up with leads on a regular basis to promote the search for greener alternatives will pay off even though it can be a slow process.

**Contact Persons for Inquiries:**

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