



# Reducing Red Bag Misuse

What constitutes regulated medical waste (RMW) is defined nationally by OSHA and its disposal is regulated at the state level \* §

RMW EXAMPLES:  
MICROBIOLOGICAL WASTES  
HUMAN BLOOD AND BLOOD PRODUCTS  
PATHOLOGICAL WASTES  
CONTAMINATED SHARPS

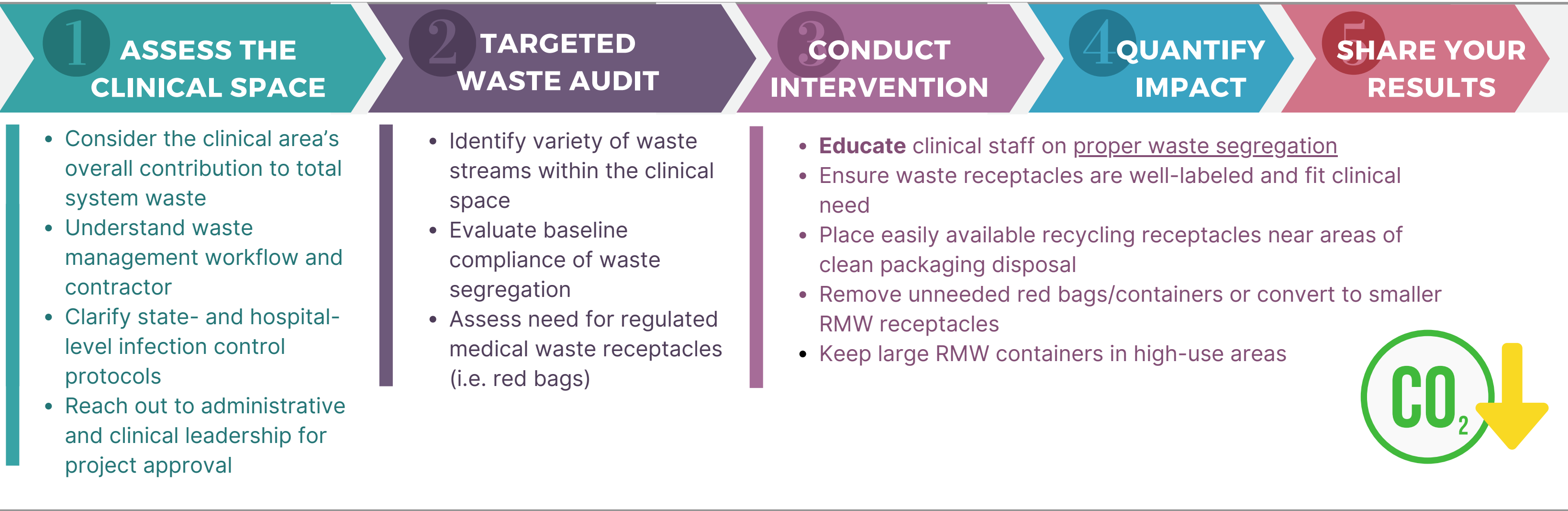
RMW disposal is often associated with **higher financial costs**

At Brigham and Women's Hospital, RMW disposal costs **5-times** as much as regular waste disposal.



RMW disposal also has harmful environmental side effects

Many of the methods for treating and disposing of RMW have **high energy requirements** or are **environmentally polluting**



## CHALLENGES

- 1 Lack of clinical staff education on waste segregation**  
(e.g. environmental and financial impacts)
- 2 Time pressure on throughput for clinical care**
- 3 Infection control safety protocols**

## SOLUTIONS

- 1 Connect with local clinical champions**  
Recruiting clinical champions to lead education efforts is likely to improve effectiveness of such efforts
- 2 Design waste streams to best align with clinical workflow**  
Improving access to appropriate waste receptacles where needed will improve compliance to OSHA standards
- 3 Research state, city, and hospital infection control / waste disposal policies prior to project implementation**  
Include infection control colleagues in project design and implementation to assure compliance and buy-in

## BENEFITS

- Reduce carbon emissions from transport of waste to processing facilities and emissions / harmful byproducts of RMW processing
- Potentially for simultaneous improvement of recycling efforts

## COST SAVINGS

- Upfront costs may increase due to:
  - Increased hospital management costs
  - Initial purchasing of new waste receptacles
- However reducing inappropriate overuse of RMW and switching to normal waste stream will reduce costs in the medium- to long-term by upwards of **\$200,000**

