# 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

QUANTIFY

#### 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





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# ASSESS THE CLINICAL SPACE

- Consider the clinical area's overall contribution to total system waste
- Understand waste management workflow and contractor
- Clarify state- and hospitallevel infection control protocols
- Reach out to administrative and clinical leadership for project approval

## TARGETED WASTE AUDIT

- Identify variety of waste streams within the clinical space
- Evaluate baseline compliance of waste segregation
- Assess need for regulated medical waste receptacles (i.e. red bags)

# CONDUCT INTERVENTION

ERVENTION

• Educate clinical staff on proper waste segregation

- IMPACT RESULTS
- Ensure waste receptacles are well-labeled and fit clinical need
- Place easily available recycling receptacles near areas of clean packaging disposal
- Remove unneeded red bags/containers or convert to smaller RMW receptacles
- Keep large RMW containers in high-use areas

#### **CHALLENGES**

Lack of clinical staff education on waste segregation

(e.g environmental and financial impacts)

- Time pressure on throughput for clinical care
- Infection control safety protocols

#### **SOLUTIONS**

Connect with local clinical champions

Recruiting clinical champions to lead education efforts is likely to improve effectiveness of such efforts

Design waste streams to best align with clinical workflow

Improving access to appropriate waste receptacles where needed will improve compliance to OSHA standards

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



- 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









