



10 Essential Tips for Reducing Supply Waste

Is your department's supply room or cabinet cluttered with a mix of overstocked, understocked and out-of-date materials? Throughout Kaiser Permanente, unit-based teams are taking stock of their supplies and finding they can save time and money by designing better systems for organizing and ordering supplies. Reducing supply waste is one of many ways that teams are helping KP become more affordable for our members and patients.



- 1 Sort your supplies to determine which ones to keep, which should be disposed of, and which you need more information about before making a decision.
- 2 Create an opportunity for everyone in the department to give input about how often different supplies get used, so you don't eliminate something the department needs.
- 3 Organize the supplies by figuring where each item belongs and then labeling supplies and shelves. Also set "par" levels, figuring out the quantity the department should always have on hand.
- 4 Remember safety when organizing the supplies. Make sure people won't have to bend too low, reach too far or lift something that's too heavy.
- 5 Establish a signal for when supplies need to be re-ordered. For example, the signal might be flipping the bin upside down, filling out a re-order card or alerting whoever is in charge of ordering supplies. And have a system for alerting people when an item is getting close to its expiration date.

- 6 Routinize the new system by having a plan to make sure supplies stay sorted, in order and clean. For example, create a checklist to make sure the new procedures are followed or assign someone to sign off at the end of the day that the supplies are ready for the next day's work.
- 7 Check in regularly with other team members to make sure the new system is working and to tweak it if it needs adjustments.
- 8 Consider approaching departments similar to yours that may order the same supplies. You may be able to consolidate orders. For example, many departments in the same medical facility order sutures.
- 9 Calculate how much money you've saved. Compare what you were spending before on supplies to what you're spending now.
- 10 Take before and after pictures to help you communicate the story of how your department reduced waste.

These practices are gleaned from reporting done by LMP Communications across Kaiser Permanente and from data entered into UBT Tracker. They are intended not as a definitive list but as a starting point for team discussions.

