**Creating a Sustainable Workplace**

Shewit Adane

Old Dominion University

MPH 784: Creating Sustainable Environmental Futures

Dr. Steven M. Becker

November 30, 2022

The healthcare system is vast and may provide a diverse range of services and resources. The Genetics and IVF Institute offers fertility services to persons who are receiving medical treatments as well as individuals and couples who want to establish a family. Furthermore, the company has a donor program that allows individuals to donate reproductive cells to those who need them. This organization's current practices may not address today's environmental and/or health concerns. Some recommendations could be made to assist the organization in becoming more plant-based and sustainable. Changes such as using recycling services, purchasing recyclable food products, and the employer purchasing plant-based, sustainable meals for monthly lunches could make a dramatic contribution to public health.

The Genetics and IVF Institute is a full-service fertility facility located in Fairfax, Virginia. Since 1984, the organization has assisted thousands of patients from all over the world in achieving their desire of starting a family. There are several branches within this organization that function both independently and collaboratively. I primarily work in the Fairfax Cryobank branch as a laboratory technician. The Fairfax Cryobank branch specializes in sperm preservation for both donors and clients. We provide fertility preservation services to clients receiving medical treatment that include chemotherapy, radiation, and other procedures that might compromise fertility. We also offer preservation services to those who are having ICI, IUI, IVF, ICSI, or ART treatments to get pregnant. In addition, we have a donor program for anyone who wishes to help individuals and couples who are trying to start families. The donor program is a comprehensive program that involves several stages of screening. Approximately, one in every 2,000 people qualifies to become an official donor. The donor program is designed to assist individuals and couples in starting a family. The FDA regulates our company, which necessitates compliance with any of the standards. All programs available within the organization require careful adherence to standard operating procedures as well as all applicable regulations. I've been employed for this organization for the last two years. My specific role within this organization is that of a laboratory technician. As a lab technician in the Fairfax Cryobank division, I am responsible for a wide range of tasks, including but not limited to conducting analysis and cryopreservation of semen, data input, laboratory record verification and filing, venipuncture, packaging and shipping serology to outside facilities for testing. I also have donor-related tasks, such as assessing and accepting applications.

Throughout my time with our organization, I have come to believe that many of our common procedural practices are obsolete and environmentally unfavorable. First and foremost, all of our paperwork is completed both electronically and physically. On many occasions, several additional documents are printed mistakenly. We were also given additional copies of papers that we did not require. There are also no recycling systems in place. Consequently, the additional documents are discarded in our shred bin, resulting in paper being shredded and discarded as regular waste. Additionally, we order bottled water, juice, and pre-packaged snacks for clients and donors. We also have a Keurig coffee machine for both employees, clients, and donors to use. These sorts of food are not prepared in environmentally friendly methods. Furthermore, due to a lack of recycling practices within the organization, food waste that could potentially be recycled is not recycled. Many passing individuals eat these easy to grab and go snack, then discard the wrappers and bottles in the regular trash can. Overall, there is a significant quantity of waste that may be disposed of in a more environmentally friendly manner; however, no attempts are being made to address this issue. Lastly, the employer orders lunch for the employees once or twice a month when we reach or surpass our goals. Typically, we order any type of food, regardless of whether it is beneficial to our health or the environment.

The first recommendation I have for transitioning our workplace to a more plant-based, sustainable practice is to provide recycling services for recyclable materials including food waste. The organization's provision of recycling procedures will make it simpler for individuals to recycle food waste. With the adoption of recycling services, all pre-packaged food and bottled beverages may be disposed in a more environmentally responsible manner. A secondary recommendation is to exclusively buy snacks that produce recyclable food waste. Keurig k-cups are also accepted for recycling by some recycling companies. Donors, customers, and employees all use the Keurig machine on a regular basis. As a result, we go through a several boxes of k-cup cartons per week. Recycling k-cups has the potential to significantly reduce food waste. Recycling k-cups has the potential to drastically reduce the quantity of food waste produced. The primary and secondary recommendations will complement one another to assist the organization in becoming more food sustainable. There will be a significant impact if recycling methods are implemented, as well as selecting snacks that create recyclable food waste. Along with these efforts, recycling advertisements featuring recycling benefit statistics should be placed around the facility. The usage of advertisements will allow those who utilize the facilities to be informed as well as participate in the initiatives. Acknowledging the benefits of recycling within the facilities might encourage individuals to recycle more. Finally, I recommend that the company consider plant-based, sustainable alternatives to the monthly meals we receive when we meet our goals. Encouraging and promotional emails can go along with the provision of the plant-based meals around the time of the monthly lunches. These monthly emails should encourage employees to incorporate plant-based meals in their diets. Furthermore, the company should emphasize the advantages of substituting animal-based products with plant-based alternatives. By providing healthier, more sustainable food alternatives, the company can emphasize both employee and environmental health.

Natural resources are diminishing, while landfills are filling up at an alarming rate. The present methods of manufacturing, consumption, and waste disposal are no longer sustainable (NIH, n.d.). Recycling is extremely essential for the environment since it decreases the consumption of natural resources by reusing existing materials (NIH, n.d.). Everybody can assist in making our country more sustainable. Individuals and large organizations alike must reassess our perspectives and behaviors towards waste disposal. Through reducing waste and recycling existing products, we can all contribute to environmental protection, natural resource conservation, and long-term sustainability (NIH, n.d.). Promoting plant-based, sustainable diets can be beneficial to both human and the environmental health. The usage of monthly plant-based meals at the expense of the employer, as well as informational and promotional emails to encourage employees to incorporate more plant-based meals into their diets, may influence individuals. According to the Climate Change 2022 report, transitioning to plant-based diets that include in legumes, nuts, fruits, and vegetables may lead to considerable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (PCRM, n.d.). Furthermore, there is a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and mortality from diet-related noncommunicable diseases (PCRM, n.d.). The combined effect of the two recommendations greatly promotes a healthy and sustainable, both of which are vital aspects of public health.

The Genetics and IVF Institute is a fertility clinic that also has donation programs. Many organizations, including this one, may engage in practices that are harmful for environment and human health. Recommendations such as implementing recycling services, purchasing recyclable food products, and the employer purchasing plant-based, sustainable meals may make a major difference. These recommendations may help people include more plant-based meals into their diets. Furthermore, this may motivate employees to recycle more at work and perhaps outside of work. These advantages may lead to a more sustainable environment, improved human health, and the overall betterment of public health.

Reference:

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. (n.d.). *A Vegan Diet: Eating for the Environment*. Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. Retrieved November 25, 2022, from https://www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/vegan-diet-environment

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Environmental programs benefits of recycling*. National Institutes of Health. Retrieved November 25, 2022, from https://nems.nih.gov/environmental-programs/pages/benefits-of-recycling.aspx