

Environmental Sustainability

GETTING STARTED GUIDE

a resource from the Catholic Health Association and Practice Greenhealth



A close-up photograph of a green leaf, possibly a lily, against a blurred green background. The leaf is the central focus, with its veins clearly visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, creating a sense of depth and natural beauty.

CARE FOR CREATION

is not a new component of Catholic identity.

*It is as old as Genesis, and is woven into the very
fabric of Catholic mission.*

DAN MISLEH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CATHOLIC COALITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Environmental sustainability is increasingly seen as a core value in Catholic health care organizations. It responds to the biblical command to care for creation, the public health imperatives to prevent disease and improve community health, and the mission call to defend and promote human life and dignity, care for the poor and vulnerable and steward the earth's resources.

This guide, written for persons both formally charged with helping their organizations “go green” as well as those who simply have a desire to do so, combines the experience of sustainability pioneers in Catholic health care and the knowledge of Practice Greenhealth. It provides guidance on:

- 4 Understanding*
the mission basis for environmental sustainability
- 7 Educating*
yourself and others about the issues
- 9 Securing*
the support and engagement of leadership, staff and communities
- 16 Forming*
a green team
- 18 Developing*
policies
- 19 Establishing*
a baseline
- 20 Setting goals*
identifying projects and metrics for tracking
- 22 Evaluating*
and tracking progress
- 24 Creating*
communications plans
- 26 Applying*
for sustainability awards
- 28 Utilizing*
available resources



UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION BASIS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The mission of Catholic health care is to continue Jesus' mission of love and healing today, bringing alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace. Our mission guides us to act responsibly toward the environment in order to show our respect for all creation and to promote the health of our communities and the world.

We recognize that:

- ✦ **The Church's social tradition calls us to promote and defend the dignity, and therefore the health, of all persons at every stage of life.**

"Our tradition calls us to protect the life and dignity of the human person, and it is increasingly clear that this task cannot be separated from the care and defense of all of creation."

— USCCB, RENEWING THE EARTH: AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION AND ACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN LIGHT OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

🌐 www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/ejp/bishopsstatement.shtml

- ✦ **God's creation is a gift to us and deserves our reverence and protection.**

"The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it."

GENESIS 2:15

- ✦ **Humans and all of the earth are linked and dependent on each other.**

"[W]e cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations."

— POPE JOHN PAUL II, 1990 WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE, NO. 6

🌐 www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace_en.html

✦ **The gospel message requires concern for the most vulnerable — those poor, young or frail who are often most hurt by environmental hazards.**

“In most countries today, it is the poor and the powerless who most directly bear the brunt of environmental degradation. Unable to do otherwise, they live in polluted lands, near toxic waste dumps, or squat in public lands and other people’s properties without any access to basic services.”

— ARCHBISHOP CELESTINO MIGLIORE, PERMANENT OBSERVER OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

🌐 http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2007/documents/rc_seg-st_20071029_sustainable-development_en.html

“Environmental degradation makes the life of the poor especially unbearable.”

— POPE BENEDICT XVI, AUGUST 27, 2006

🌐 <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/catholic-teachings/>

✦ **Concern for the earth is a moral issue.**

“I wish to repeat that the ecological crisis is a moral issue... Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith.”

— POPE JOHN PAUL II, 1990 WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE, NO. 15

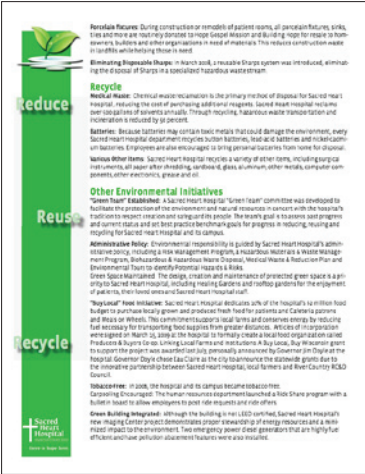
🌐 www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace_en.html



GREEN TIP:

Use environmentally-related prayers and reflections from various faith traditions to begin meetings and in publications. See especially:

- ✦ St. Francis’ The Canticle of the Sun:
www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147488058
- ✦ Prayer for Sustainability of our Earth from CHA:
www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147488057
- ✦ 2010 Prayer Service from CHA:
www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147484494
- ✦ Suggested Prayers from the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change:
www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Suggested-Prayers.pdf



The "Sacred Heart Hospital's Commitment to Environmental Sustainability" is available for review at www.chausa.org/environment under resources.

EDUCATING YOURSELF AND OTHERS ABOUT THE ISSUES

COMMUNITY HEALTH

The Hippocratic Oath obliges us to "first, do no harm." Yet because environmental hazards are responsible for many cancers, chronic illnesses, developmental disabilities and birth defects, health care facilities' chemical, food, energy and waste practices can harm the environment and the health of patients, employees and the communities served.

Through the strength of more than 2,000 Catholic health care sponsors, systems, facilities and related organizations, we have the power and responsibility to improve the health of our communities — locally and globally — by reducing energy use, water and waste, shrinking the carbon footprint of Catholic health care, using environmentally safe building materials, supplies and medical devices and adopting sustainable food policies. Information about the issues is widely available.

Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm are two very relevant sources as are the following:

- ✦ The Healthier Hospitals Initiative at: www.healthierhospitals.org/announce/lib/downloads/HHI_Agenda.pdf
- ✦ The Center for Health Design at: www.healthdesign.org/



The Sisters of Mercy Health System at its Consolidated Services Center builds custom surgical packs which has cut costs 20 percent, makes things more efficient in the operating room and greatly reduces the waste stream.

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

In the United States, health care is extremely expensive, and cost containment in health care is a goal at the national, governmental, system and organizational levels. While it is true that some sustainability projects are more capital intensive than others, many Catholic health care organizations have found that certain sustainability projects enable them to save financial resources through the consumption of fewer resources and the production of less waste. In addition, many organizations have found ways to make sustainability projects cost-neutral.

In order to convincingly present the case for environmental sustainability, you need to help your decision makers take a long-term, holistic approach to the issue. Doing so can help your organization's personnel understand that many projects can help your organization concurrently exercise both environmental and financial stewardship, and that even capital-intensive projects can often be justified within the framework of the Catholic health care ministry.

Practice Greenhealth's resource "The Business Case for Greening the Health Care Sector," could prove very helpful. It is available to Practice Greenhealth members and others at practicegreenhealth.org/businesscase.

In addition, ENERGY STAR offers guides and manuals, facility benchmarking, as well as an overview of energy use and energy efficiency opportunities, low-cost measures and cost-effective investments.

Find ENERGY STAR information at:

www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=healthcare.bus_healthcare

“And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways...”

— LUKE 1:76

Although John the Baptist was called to be a prophetic voice for God’s vision and plan, we know from our own experience that speaking out against conventional wisdom, systems, and structures can be a difficult task — especially when we are amongst our peers, friends, and family. Jesus Himself cautions us that “no prophet is accepted in his own native place” (Luke 4: 24).

Yet despite these challenges, we know that “[s]ome people God has designated in the church to be... prophets” (1 Cor 12: 28). While each prophetic calling is unique, it is always an invitation to speak out against improprieties and injustices, and to articulate a worldview more consistent with God’s vision for our world.

If you are currently in a health care organization whose environmental practices and policies are less than what you think they should be, perhaps you are called to be the prophetic voice needed to inspire change. CHA invites you to reflect upon and pray about this prospect, and to discern how God is calling you to help build up His Kingdom on earth.

SECURING THE SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT OF LEADERSHIP, STAFF AND COMMUNITIES

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Experience demonstrates that while a comprehensive program of environmental sustainability should secure the help and support of staff from across each health care organization (see “Forming a Green Team”), the most successful sustainability initiatives are at some point championed and advocated for by a provider’s sponsor, board, executive and physician leadership. As Practice Greenhealth’s “The Business Case for Greening the Health Care Sector” points out,

“Commitment from the administration reassures staff that these programs are supported at the highest levels of the organization.”

www.practicegreenhealth.org/pubs/toolkit/reports/BusinessCaseForGreening.pdf

In order to gain senior leadership support for a program of environmental sustainability, enlist the help of others in your organization who understand the importance of ecological responsibility. Metrics are valuable tools in gaining support. Practice Greenhealth and Health Care Without Harm have resources that provide benchmarking data and carbon footprint counters.

Help your leadership team understand that a program of environmental responsibility should not be seen as an “add-on” to the current model of care, but instead, as an important part of the organizations Catholic identity.

“Follow the model of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and ecology.”

Many in the faith community draw inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi, who saw the creative love of God in nature and revered the natural world as a gift from God to be cherished. Yet while St. Francis’ ethic of ecological stewardship offers an excellent model to reflect on and consider, one of the cornerstones of his preaching was the importance of leading by example.

As the founder of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), St. Francis wisely led his followers first by his actions and secondly by his words. This ethic of leadership through action is summarized by the quote attributed to him: “Preach the Gospel at all times; use words if necessary.”

Please take an opportunity to reflect on the life of St. Francis, and consider how you can follow in his footsteps by both promoting an ethic of environmental responsibility and leading by example.

GREEN TIP:

Environmental sustainability is often a fundamental principle of Catholic health care organizations’ religious sponsors. Be sure to let your sponsor know about your efforts and invite their help and participation.

The following resources may be helpful as you work with leadership to see the relationship between environmental sustainability and your organization’s mission and identity:

- * Environmental Sustainability and Catholic Health Care
www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147484550
- * Environmental Sustainability and Catholic Health Care Awareness
www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147484549
- * Environmental Sustainability and Catholic Health Care Mission
www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147484551

Once you have secured leadership support for a comprehensive environmental sustainability program, your leadership can use Practice Greenhealth’s “The Business Case for Greening the Health Care Sector” to assist in developing and implementing a program with a high likelihood of success.

 www.practicegreenhealth.org/pubs/toolkit/reports/BusinessCaseForGreening.pdf



A Providence Health and Services Green Team member helps educate her colleagues.

GREEN TIP:

What Does Leadership Look Like?

- * Announce policies
- * Develop an environmental mission
- * Encourage dialogue
- * Promote/publicize your successes
- * Develop an executive sustainability dashboard
- * Identify a lead person and committee structure for sustainability activity
- * Apply for awards
- * Develop a sustainability strategic plan and make sustainability part of the organization's strategic plan
- * Report annually to board of directors, staff and the community.
- * Develop a communication strategy
- * Include sustainability performance measures in leadership job descriptions

ASSIGN LEAD RESPONSIBILITY

In order to coordinate and energize your organization's program of environmental sustainability, consider assigning someone in your organization or system to be the ecology coordinator, or create a position and hire a full-time or part-time sustainability director.

Of more importance than expertise on sustainability is what the individual brings to the role. The best choice for sustainability leadership is someone who has an understanding of and passion for the work, and who is expert in the areas of interdepartmental engagement, change management, communication and/or education.



Staff members at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Clair, Wis., signed the “Greening the OR Initiative” pledge — an initiative by Practice Greenhealth.

While there is no one specific department that always leads sustainability efforts, the most successful facilities have a lead person who:

- ✦ Reports directly to senior leadership,
- ✦ Has the ability to cross departmental lines, and
- ✦ Has firm support from leadership to effectively impact change and create a culture of environmental excellence.

ENGAGE STAFF

Once your organization’s leadership and key personnel have fully embraced an ethic of environmental sustainability, staff members can be engaged by talking to them about working and living in a clean and safe environment. Many staff members practice environmental sustainability in their personal lives. Invite them to tell their stories and celebrate their contributions, communicating their individual messages and ideas to the greater organization.

GREEN TIP:

Communication devices such as newsletters, weekly e-mails or a green bulletin board can be effective ways of maintaining visibility for the initiative and keeping staff engaged in and supportive of the process.

Some clinicians may be tuned in to environmental sustainability issues and initiatives. Nurses have been especially active in the movement of health care responsibility.

 www.ehnursing.org

 www.atsdr.cdc.gov/EHN/

 www.envirn.umaryland.edu

GREEN TIP:

One of the most effective ways to approach clinicians about increasing environmental stewardship and using “greener” products is with evidence-based data.



Consider inviting a thought leader to address senior leadership and staff and/or conduct grand rounds. Topics such as the relationship of sustainability to public health and wellness will help others understand the imperative for action and the role of leadership.

GREEN TIP:

Encourage “green commuting” by organizing car pools, providing vans from public transportation or awarding bike grants. Make information on participation easily accessible for the staff, and communicate with employees on the success of the programs.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Many communities are currently involved with sustainability activities or may be ready to start. Your organization can represent the health care ministry and health sector by participating in local and regional sustainability initiatives, and may also seek recognition through any regional awards programs and/or speaking opportunities.

GREEN TIP:

Ways to engage communities can include:

- ✦ Celebrate the Feast of St. Francis (October 4) with local schools and parishes
- ✦ Participate in community-wide Earth Day (April 22) activities
- ✦ Be part of community gardens
- ✦ Hold farmers’ markets on grounds
- ✦ Recycle batteries and other items
- ✦ Partner with local non-profits on events that promote sustainability and stewardship
- ✦ Hold a sustainability fair and invite community organizations to set up booths
- ✦ Host educational sessions and invite the greater community
- ✦ Organize an advocacy day for staff to volunteer for a green project in the community

Legislative advocacy is another way health care organizations can be involved with their local, national and global communities. Some examples of advocacy include:

- ✦ Urging local governments to clean polluted lakes
- ✦ Working to eliminate lead paint from public housing
- ✦ Writing in support of stronger US chemicals policies to reduce hazardous materials
- ✦ Supporting and promoting drug take-back programs, and educating the public as to the hazards of inappropriate medicine disposal
- ✦ Supporting federal and global climate change policies
- ✦ Investing in companies with proven records for environmental responsibility



Catholic Healthcare West's Northridge Hospital Medical Center Green Team.

FORMING A GREEN TEAM

A multi-disciplinary team made up of associates from across your organization will help ensure that sustainability programs are feasible, and that education/awareness initiatives are effectively targeted. Toward that end, your organization's leaders can charge an existing committee with green team responsibilities or create a new "green team."

The green team should be made up persons in the organization who care about sustainability, who practice environmental responsibility in their own lives and who can make an impact in your organization. Some departments and offices that often make up the green team include:

- ✦ Public relations and marketing
- ✦ Materials management
- ✦ Mission
- ✦ Operations
- ✦ Leadership champions
- ✦ Information technology
- ✦ Supply chain
- ✦ Risk management
- ✦ Operations
- ✦ Nursing/physicians
- ✦ Engineering
- ✦ Finance
- ✦ Pharmacy
- ✦ Environmental services
- ✦ Food services

The role of the team will be to evaluate current programs, and to create organization-wide goals as well as an action plan. Specifically, the green team will:

- ✦ Perform a needs assessment and gather baseline data
- ✦ Set annual environmental goals and develop action plans
- ✦ Develop an education plan for new and current staff
- ✦ Create resources for staff to use internally and beyond the office
- ✦ Monitor progress and report to leadership, staff and community

For help in understanding the role of the green team, see the CHA resource *Environmental Sustainability and Catholic Health Care — Getting Started*.

🌐 www.chausa.org/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=2147484548

To learn what makes green teams effective, see *A Guide for Creating Effective Green Teams in Health Care* from Practice Greenhealth. Refer to Practice Greenhealth's Green Team Guide for specifics around teams.

🌐 www.practicegreenhealth.org/tools/toolkit/greenteams/

 **GREEN TIP:**

It's important to create the committee structure, identify the lead and committee participants and then find the right pace. This is a long journey and pacing is critical to avoid burnout and overwhelmed committee members. Low hanging fruit yields the best long-term harvest.

DEVELOPING POLICIES

For your organization to successfully implement and sustain a comprehensive program of environmental sustainability, it is necessary to articulate the components of the initiative, why they are important and how and by whom they will be implemented. This can be accomplished through the creation of a formal environmental policy which is endorsed by the highest level of leadership and widely published throughout the organization.

A health care provider's overall environmental policy should evolve from, and be an extension of, the vision for sustainability discussed above. In addition, specific policies can address and provide guidelines for:

- ✦ Waste management
- ✦ Energy management
- ✦ Water management
- ✦ Food systems
- ✦ Toxic materials
- ✦ Purchasing
- ✦ Building design, construction, and renovation
- ✦ Housekeeping and maintenance
- ✦ Transportation
- ✦ Construction and renovations
- ✦ Grounds and landscaping

CHA is collecting sample policies from members. For some examples, see:

🌐 www.chausa.org/Ministry_Examples.aspx

Setting Baselines Using the Joint Commission Structure

The Joint Commission requirements (www.jointcommission.org) can support environmental sustainability and serve as a structure for green activities.

The commission's Environment of Care management standards call for the development of management plans in seven areas: safety, security, biomedical engineering, utilities management, emergency management, life safety and hazardous materials and waste.

In addition, standards for medication management and pharmaceutical waste management have sustainability implications.

The Joint Commission requires organizations to develop two performance indicators per plan. For example, in developing plans for hazardous materials and waste, organizations must select two activities to track with metrics and report on a regular basis. This could include tracking baseline data on waste and spill tracking, and be used in efforts toward red bag reduction, hazardous chemical use.

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

In order to begin working towards your organization's vision of environmental sustainability, it is important to know the place from which you are beginning. Specifically, an organization must have a baseline of its strengths and weaknesses in order to understand what adjustments are necessary and how to most effectively begin pursuing them.

The best way to establish such a baseline measurement is to do a facility-wide audit of waste, energy consumption and water to establish a facility baseline, performance metrics and direct future projects.

Practice Greenhealth and others can help you compare your sustainability metrics to others. A good place to start is to track ENERGY STAR rating for energy performance (www.energystar.gov/), water use in comparison to national averages as set by Practice Greenhealth, and total waste generation as compared to other hospitals through Practice Greenhealth's sustainability benchmark report.

Another assessment tool is the Joint Commission standards, including Leadership Standards, Medication Management and Environment of Care (www.jointcommission.org). In addition to providing environmental metrics for assessment, the Joint Commission standards also offer the opportunity to first ensure compliance before moving into best practices.

GREEN TIP:

Add sustainability metrics to senior level dashboard for at-a-glance connection to activities. For example, dashboard metrics could include total waste per adjusted patient day. Review 2009 and 2010 National Benchmarks from Practice Greenhealth at www.practicegreenhealth.org/awards/environmental-excellence-awardsbenchmark-report/

*Baseline Example:
Catholic Health East*

In their *Environmentally Responsible Healthcare Starter Kit*, Catholic Health East (CHE) addresses how to establish a waste baseline by conducting a waste assessment.

For CHE, “A waste assessment serves three basic purposes:

1. Establishes a better understanding of purchasing, waste generation, and waste disposal practices.
2. Identifies opportunities for prioritizing efforts.
3. Establishes a baseline from which to measure the success of the waste reduction program.”

While CHE recognizes that “the complexity and comprehensiveness of assessments vary, they generally include the following steps:

- ☛ “Reviewing facility operations and records of waste generated.
- ☛ Identifying potential waste reduction options.
- ☛ Identifying where recycling containers should be placed.
- ☛ Assessing the operational and economic feasibility of the most promising options.”

SETTING GOALS AND IDENTIFYING PROJECTS

Once an organization has established a comprehensive environmental policy and has a baseline understanding of its current operations, the green team can begin to set goals and prioritize projects.

Start out by setting one or two “winnable” goals to be achieved within a certain timeframe. First goals could include:

- ☛ Reducing paper consumption by 10 percent this fiscal year
- ☛ Implementing a streamline recycling program within six months
- ☛ Eliminating Styrofoam within one year
- ☛ Holding an organization-wide presentation on the importance of environmental sustainability by a certain date

For other ideas for goals and projects, see “How Your Organization Can Reduce Its Environmental Footprint” in CHA’s *Catholic Health Care Ministry — Environmental Responsibility* booklet.

The process of setting a few “winnable” goals can help a green team to gain experience, establish credibility, demonstrate the feasibility of environmental responsibility and build momentum for bigger initiatives later on. As objectives are met and projects are implemented, green teams can then expand both the number and scope of initiatives it takes on, progressively updating previous goals and setting new ones.

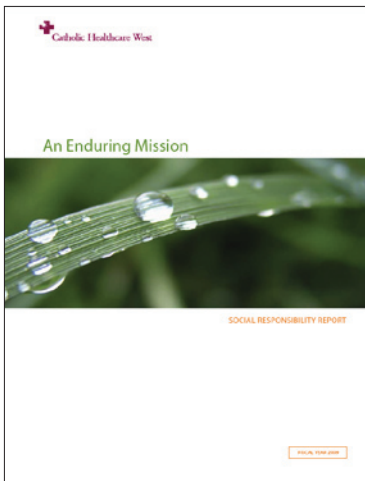


GREEN TIP:

What are some first steps?

- ❖ Announce: We are “going green”
- ❖ Purchase recycled paper and print on both sides
- ❖ Keep track of all waste
- ❖ Eliminate mercury-containing devices and equipment
- ❖ Tell vendors you want less-hazardous products
- ❖ Sign the Health Care Without Harm Healthy Food Pledge at www.noharm.org
- ❖ Buy local and organic foods
- ❖ Join the ENERGY STAR program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) at www.energystar.gov
- ❖ Replace disposables with mugs and glasses
- ❖ Eliminate bottled water
- ❖ Participate in free Practice Greenhealth webinars at www.practicegreenhealth.org

These posters from Providence Health and Services, and other resources, are available at www.chausa.org/environment under resources.



Catholic Healthcare West's Social Accountability Report includes information related to the system's efforts, as well as benchmarks:

The report can be accessed on CHW's website at www.chwhealth.org/stellent/groups/public/@xinternet_con_sys/documents/webcontent/stgss045842.pdf.

EVALUATING AND TRACKING PROGRESS

In order to effectively develop and expand your organization's program of environmental sustainability, it is necessary to evaluate and track your progress. Ask:

- ✦ Were green team goals met?
- ✦ What are the challenges faced (and may continue to face)?
- ✦ Is there room for more ambitious goals?
- ✦ Are there additional people who should be invited to be part of the green team?
- ✦ Are there other facilities that could share their experience?

As part of this evaluation, you might consider performing another facility audit (either comprehensive or specialized) in order to obtain specific data which can be compared with your initial baseline, as well as to the national benchmarks identified by Practice Greenhealth. Practice Greenhealth's "The Business Case for Greening the Health Care Sector" recommends that those in charge of your provider's sustainability program,

"report annually on progress to-date, including a synopsis of the facility's annual goals, programs underway, any worker exposures or regulatory infractions, and key environmental performance metrics that can be compared each year with national Practice Greenhealth benchmarks. Including highlights of the facility's environmental achievements in the Annual Report is also a good way to create transparency, build goodwill and demonstrate commitment to the organization's community benefit or corporate social responsibility programs."

🌐 www.practicegreenhealth.org/pubs/toolkit/reports/BusinessCaseForGreening.pdf



Providence Health and Services has developed numerous posters and informative materials to share their environmental sustainability efforts. See these and others at www.chausa.org/environment under resources.

CREATING COMMUNICATIONS PLANS

The successful development, implementation, and maintenance of an environmental sustainability program provides your organization with an opportunity to share this work with the board and sponsor, the public, and the larger health care ministry. One effective means by which some organizations carry this out is through the development of a communication plan to brand and promote sustainability programs and stories.

This environmental communications plan could take many forms, but may include a poster campaign, new employee and annual education, patient education, lecture series and newsletter items. You might also work with your marketing department to develop a sustainability logo and complimentary resources. For example, see CHA's "Faithfully Healing the Earth" logo and materials at:

🌐 www.chausa.org/environmental_responsibility/

Another great example of telling the larger story is "The Luminary Project: Nurses Lighting the Way to Environmental Health," which is an effort to capture the illuminating stories of nurses' activities to improve human health by improving the health of the environment. The stories on the website highlight how nurses are creatively and strategically addressing environmental problems and illuminating the way towards safe hospitals, communities with clean air, land and water and children born without toxic chemicals in their bodies. It can be accessed at

🌐 <http://www.theluminaryproject.org/>

While an effective environmental communications strategy is an on-going and continuous process, you may choose to make a special effort to tell your story around the Feast of St. Francis (October 4) and Earth Day (April 22). These dates offer special opportunities to celebrate environmental successes and work with your community through such things as farmer's markets, computer take back programs, tree planting, clean ups, lecture series and vendor fairs to promote sustainability and demonstrate leadership in community.

- ✦ For ideas on how to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis, see “Planning Guide for Promoting and Taking the St. Francis Pledge” from the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change.

🌐 <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/resources/>

- ✦ For ideas on how to celebrate Earth Day, see Health Care Without Harm's recommendations at:

🌐 www.noharm.org/us_canada/events/earthday/

APPLYING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS

There are several organizations that bestow awards on organizations making strides to faithfully steward the earth's resources. These awards can be an important component of an organization's overall program of environmental sustainability, as noted by Practice Greenhealth:

“The application process provides an incentive to determine environmental performance metrics each year, and receiving an award honors staff for a job well done, while providing another opportunity to get positive press in the local community.”

🌐 www.practicegreenhealth.org/pubs/toolkit/reports/BusinessCaseForGreening.pdf

Learn more about awards programs, such as those from Practice Greenhealth, at:

🌐 www.practicegreenhealth.org/awards/

and ENERGY STAR at:

🌐 www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=pt_awards.pt_es_awards

GREEN TIP:

Consider signing onto other reporting initiatives such as

- ✳ Ceres at www.ceres.org/page.aspx?pid=705 (link), the *Global Compact*
- ✳ Global Compact at www.unglobalcompact.org/ or *Climate Registry*
- ✳ Climate Registry at www.theclimateregistry.org/



UTILIZING AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Beginning and maintaining an environmental sustainability program can seem difficult — maybe even overwhelming. However, the good news is that you don't have to start from scratch and you are not alone in your endeavor. There are a number of organizations, materials and resources available to help your health care organization more fully exercise an ethic of ecological responsibility — and all of them want to help you get started! For help, inspiration and resources, connect with:

PRACTICE GREENHEALTH

Practice Greenhealth (<http://practicegreenhealth.org>) is a membership based not-for-profit organization that provides guidance, strategy, tools, technical assistance and recognition through their Environmental Excellence Awards Program and Sustainability Benchmark Report.

Some of its resources include:

- ✦ The Business Case for Greening the Health Care Sector (www.practicegreenhealth.org/pubs/toolkit/reports/BusinessCaseForGreening.pdf).
- ✦ The Eco Check List
- ✦ Introductory webinar and
- ✦ Other assessment tools to help create the structure to support the work
- ✦ Other specific guidance to tackle programmatic areas of interest.



THE CATHOLIC COALITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (<http://catholicsandclimatechange.org>) supports and complements the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development (formerly, the Department of Social Development and World Peace) and the bishops' Environmental Justice Program. The Coalition is a membership organization consisting of twelve national Catholic organizations (including CHA), and offers advice and assistance in implementing its programs.

The central organizing tool of the Coalition is the Catholic Climate Covenant: The St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor. The Pledge provides a holistic and comprehensive framework by which individuals, families, and organizations commit to:

- ✦ **PRAY** and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.
- ✦ **LEARN** about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change and environmental degradation.
- ✦ **ASSESS** how we-as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations-contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.
- ✦ **ACT** to change our choices and behaviors to reduce the ways we contribute to climate change and environmental degradation.
- ✦ **ADVOCATE** for Catholic principles and priorities in climate change and environmental discussions and decisions, especially as they impact those who are poor and vulnerable.

To learn more, and register your pledge commitment, visit

🌐 <http://catholicclimatecovenant.org>

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES

✦ Health Care Without Harm

Health Care Without Harm is an international coalition of hospitals and health care systems, medical professionals, community groups, health-affected constituencies, labor unions, environmental and environmental health organizations and religious groups.

🌐 www.noharm.org

✦ The Green Guide for Health Care

Membership in HCWH is based on an organizational commitment to the mission and goals of the campaign, and a desire to participate fully in helping to achieve them. Groups that join the campaign do not need to contribute dues. HCWH does not accept financial support from manufacturers or endorse specific products.

The Green Guide for Health Care, established in 2002, is a project of the non-profit organizations Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) and Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems (CMPBS).

🌐 www.gghc.org

✦ ENERGY STAR for Hospitals from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Energy (DOE)

🌐 www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=healthcare.bus_healthcare

✦ Healthier Hospitals Initiative

Advocate Health Care, Catholic Healthcare West, Hospital Corporation of America, Kaiser Permanente, Medstar Health and Partners Healthcare formed the Healthier Hospitals Initiative in 2010 and introduced the Healthier Hospitals Agenda, a document that outlines specific activities that hospitals can take to reduce their environmental footprint and improve health outcomes.

🌐 <http://www.healthierhospitals.org/>

✦ The Catholic Health Association

🌐 www.chausa.org/environmental_responsibility

Finally, you can join CHA's network of Catholic health organizations working to promote environmental sustainability by contacting: JTrocchio@chausa.org.



GLOBAL WARMING

and the pollution of our air, water, and soil are pervasive problems. What we do to preserve our planet today affects our health and well-being now and that of our children and grandchildren in the future.

CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE WEST'S STATEMENT
ON ITS COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY AT
[www.chwhealth.org/who we are/environment/index.htm](http://www.chwhealth.org/who_we_are/environment/index.htm)



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