

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center turns electronic waste into dollars

Reducing waste and their associated costs while preventing pollution, conserving energy and eliminating toxic mercury is a tall order for any hospital. But Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center's Information Systems Asset Management and Inventory Control department accomplished just that.

Over the course of five years, the department was instrumental in turning the hospital's asset disposal program from a cost center (whose expenses were more than \$70,000 in 2001) to a revenue producer in 2006, said Jane Matlaw, director of community relations.

Joe Cross, manager of the hospital's Information Systems Asset Management and Inventory Control department, and his team laid out an elegantly simple project scope: To develop a disposal strategy for end-of-life computer equipment that was environmentally appropriate, fiscally efficient and minimized exposure of electronic protected health information and other sensitive data.

Meanwhile, the team's goals were a bit more complex. To be successful, the project had to:

- Ensure compliance with state and federal EPA regulations concerning the disposal of CRT monitors, which are classified as hazardous waste because of internal components that contain lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic and other toxic materials;
- Pursue opportunities for recycling end-of-life computer assets through resale and donation;
- Minimize the financial impact of e-waste disposal through a cost effective recycling strategy;
- Prevent leakage of electronic protected health information and other sensitive medical center data residing on desktop computers and electronic media destined for disposal;
- Result in a new procurement strategy that called for the purchase of energy efficient and environmentally friendly desktop computing products such as LCD monitors, which are typically lead-free and Energy Star enabled; and
- Provide for education and assistance to other hospital departments responsible for managing the disposal of computer equipment.

Today, the project has become an exemplary effort incorporating recycling, resale and donation of hospital e-waste. Each year, Cross' department processes more than 2,600 pieces of electronic computing equipment – from CPUs and monitors to printers and servers. Before any computer asset leaves the hospital, it is prepped by removing all hospital identifying information such as asset tags, fully erasing hard drives following the most stringent Department of Defense standards or removing hard drives for eventual shredding and destruction. Computing equipment whose hard drives are salvaged through reformatting are processed for resale. An asset-tracking program closely follows the destination of each piece of donated equipment. The department also generates reports for each recycling pickup. The reports are regularly audited and state and federal EPA

regulations are periodically reviewed to ensure the hospital stays abreast of new developments, updates and guidelines.

In fiscal 2005, the hospital's asset disposal program began generating revenue.

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