

# CASE STUDY ► Dignity Health | In House Laundry Success at St. Joseph's Medical Center

## Benefits

- Reduced impact on community landfill by 217,500 isolation gowns and 230,340 incontinent pads.
- Higher quality product
- Cost efficient

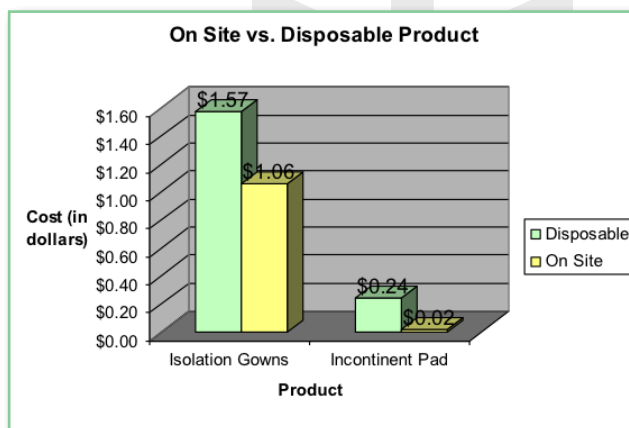
## The Problem

With the current economic climate, and labor costs in need of reduction, the on site laundry justifies the money is well spent and saved. Waste produced by medical centers significantly impacts the community landfill. Currently, St. Joseph's Medical Center utilizes approximately 220,000 reusable isolation gowns, nearly 30 gowns per isolation patient, as well as, 231,000 Incontinent Pads on an annual basis.

## The Strategy Selected

St. Joseph's Medical Center has had a long standing focus on environmental sustainability. It has a multi-disciplinary Environmental Stewardship team. While many facilities have switched to disposable gowns to reduce labor and material costs, St. Joseph's maintains its on-site laundry to process reusable products. Periodically this strategy is reassessed by the Director of Support Services and team (see chart). Each time the evaluation is made, the following are part of the process: data collection, auditing, monitoring, process improvement, and education.

As the only on site laundry service in the Dignity Health Organization, St. Joseph's Medical Center processes approximately 3 million pounds of laundry on an annual basis, which includes off site locations such as Mark Twain St. Joseph's Hospital, St. Joseph's Behavioral Health, and Immediate Care.



## Implementation Process

Unlike most strategies, the effort here is to maintain, refine and improve processes begun many years ago rather than dismantle them for largely economic reasons. The laundry staff and supervisor are at the core of the success of this service, along with the on site materials management department. Their effective communication is the key to an unimpeded operation. The infection control department is instrumental in reviewing policies and developing standards which are translated into protocol for new and existing staff.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

The greatest challenge in sustaining an on site laundry service, is the maintenance required for the necessary equipment. In order to maintain the service, frequent inspection and preventative maintenance must occur on the equipment. Another challenge associated with the service is frequently reevaluating the cost versus benefit of maintaining the service, as opposed to outsourcing or moving to disposable products. While both products offer benefits, it has been found that the reusable products provide increased comfort, dependability, and reduced waste.

## The Team:

- Director of Support Services
- Laundry/Linen Supervisor
- Laundry/Linen Staff
- Materials Management
- Infection Control
- Nursing
- Administration

## Demographic Information

St. Joseph's Medical Center is a 359-bed community medical center located in Stockton, California. The medical center is part of the Dignity Health organization, a large integrated delivery network of more than 40 hospitals serving communities across California, Arizona, and Nevada. Located in central Stockton, the St. Joseph's Medical Center specializes in cardiovascular care, comprehensive cancer services, and women and children's services including neonatal intensive care. St. Joseph's is the largest hospital and private employer in Stockton, California.

Annually Marian sees approximately 54,000 Emergency Services patients and more than 111,850 outpatient visits annually. Marian births about 250 babies a month which translates to 3,000 babies annually. Marian's Medical/Surgical Unit admits more than 800 patients a month and approximately 9,600 patients annually.

Marian employs nearly 1,600 staff members. With more than 300 physicians on the medical staff, over the last four years Marian has recruited more than 60 physicians. Marian also has approximately 300 volunteers and 150 volunteers.

