As trusted leaders, physicians can be champions of environmentally responsible health care – but how do you get started? Here are some tips and resources to help you begin your journey as a health care sustainability champion.

Get educated, then educate others

GET EDUCATED

- Visit the Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth websites to learn about health care’s environmental impact and opportunities to move toward climate-smart, environmentally responsible health care.
- Visit the Physician Network resource site.
- Plan to attend the many physician-led, CME-eligible sessions at CleanMed, the premier conference for health care sustainability leaders.
- Learn about the business case for health sector sustainability, including the potential costs savings highlighted in this report.
- Learn about the public health impacts of climate change and environmental health, as well as the health benefits of practicing sustainability in your home, medical practice, and community.
- Read policy statements from the American College of Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American College of Emergency Physicians calling on physicians to reduce the environmental impact of health care facilities.
- Check out the American College of Physicians’ climate change toolkit and the American Society of Anesthesiologists’ environmental sustainability resources, and see what’s available in your own medical society.

EDUCATE OTHERS

- Educate your colleagues about how to reduce environmental impact, with a focus on specific opportunities in your hospital.
- Present at grand rounds or a department meeting.
- Invite an expert speaker from Health Care Without Harm, Practice Greenhealth, or the Physician Network Speakers Bureau.
- Write a blog or article for your hospital newsletter.
- Share your knowledge on social media.
- Talk to your patients about how climate impacts their health and how they can reduce environmental exposures.
Conduct an internal sustainability assessment

- Find out if your hospital or health system is part of the Practice Greenhealth network.
  - If your hospital or health system is a Practice Greenhealth partner, request access to exclusive resources and get connected to your member engagement manager.
  - If your hospital isn't a Practice Greenhealth partner, learn more about the benefits of becoming a part of the Practice Greenhealth network.
- Conduct an assessment of current sustainability practices in your hospital.
  - Find out what programs are already in place and where new opportunities exist.
  - Does your hospital or health system have a green team or sustainability manager?
- Get key stakeholders involved, including environmental services, food services, pharmacy, purchasing, facilities, nursing, and operating room staff.
- What does your leadership care about?
  - Are your hospital's operations aligned with its mission statement?
  - What are your hospital's current priorities?
- You likely aren't alone in your interest, so ask around and find your allies.

Conduct an external sustainability assessment

- Are other hospitals in your community and state Practice Greenhealth members? Have they made a commitment to sustainability?
- Has your community made a commitment to renewable energy, reducing waste, or greenhouse gas emission reduction?
- What are the health and environmental issues in your community? Read your hospital’s community benefit report to see if the top health needs are related to environmental determinants of health.
- What are the climate risks in your community? Is your hospital prepared for severe weather events? Learn how extreme weather can impact health care delivery.

Start a sustainability program at your hospital or health system

- Use Practice Greenhealth’s engaged leadership toolkit to develop a strategy for talking to your hospital’s leaders about sustainability.
- Be very clear about what you’re asking for, such as joining Practice Greenhealth, starting or leading a green team, creating a recycling program, making a public commitment to climate action, starting a greening the OR program, etc.
- Who are you going to ask and how? This might include a letter, email, or in-person meeting with administrators or the board of directors.
- Know your audience and what is important to them, and customize your presentation accordingly. Highlight relevant facts, data, and information.
- Focus on solutions and the benefits of sustainability to your hospital, health system, patients, and community.
- Identify clear next steps and have a follow-up plan.

CONNECT WITH THE HEALTH CARE’S SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNITY

Join the Health Care Without Harm Physician Network and the Physicians for a Sustainable Future Facebook group to learn from others and share ideas.