

SECTION FOUR

Know Your Residents and Promote Your Program

What's Expected

The County's most successful recycling programs have the full support of residents who know which items are recyclable and how to prepare them for recycling. All these programs share the following:

- ♻️ **An understanding of residents**, their special needs and requirements, and their familiarity with recycling.
- ♻️ **Resident education that is ongoing**—not a one-time activity.
- ♻️ **Recycling messages that are simple, clear, accurate, and consistent.**
- ♻️ **Top management and staff support.**
- ♻️ **Resident participation.**

Know Your Residents

The full participation of your residents is critical to the success of your recycling program. Therefore, it is important that you assess your residents' attitudes and knowledge about recycling. When you assess resident knowledge and interest, you can detect obstacles you must overcome and identify recycling enthusiasts who can help with your program.

- ♻️ How knowledgeable are your residents on recycling requirements?
- ♻️ What are their ages and physical limitations?
- ♻️ Are your residents multi-cultural?
- ♻️ What comments or concerns do they have about recycling?
- ♻️ Who are enthusiasts and community leaders?



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Survey Your Residents

Send a short survey to each household once a year. Samples you can reproduce are included in Appendix E.

Throughout the year, **speak informally to a large segment of residents** (men, women, old, young, etc.) and ask them the questions in the survey in Appendix E.

Review your rental or occupancy records to determine turnover during the last year.

Identify the predominant languages spoken at your property.

Recycling Messages

The most effective recycling messages are simple, clear, accurate, consistent, and frequent.

Be sure to stress:

- ♻️ The **convenience** of recycling.
- ♻️ **Why** everyone should recycle (i.e., recycling is required by Montgomery County and by the state of Maryland, and it conserves energy and preserves the environment.)
- ♻️ **What** materials are recycled in your program.
- ♻️ **How** materials should be prepared for recycling.
- ♻️ **Where** residents should take their materials for collection (include a map if necessary.)
- ♻️ **Who** to call with questions, comments, or problems.

It is important to consider the specific characteristics and needs of your residents, such as how much they already know about recycling and whether they need multilingual or large print materials. Make sure your messages appear frequently and are highly visible.

The active support of site managers will help you implement and maintain your recycling program. Managers need to be familiar with all aspects of the recycling program, and they must take a leadership role in communicating with staff and residents. It is important that site managers monitor the progress

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Line Up Top Management Support

of your program, identify any problem areas and suggest adjustments and modifications. Don't forget that offices located on-site need to recycle as well. Feel free to refer managers to recycling seminars held by the County throughout the year. For information contact the TRRAC Program at **(240) 777-6400**.

Line Up Resident Support

To maintain momentum, it is important to reinforce your recycling messages on a regular basis. Residents should know about the successes of the program or any challenges that need to be overcome. Identify volunteer building or floor captains to help spread the word. Those volunteers can receive special training by calling the Recycling Volunteer Program Coordinator at **(240) 777-6400**.

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Know Your Residents and Promote Your Program

Launching a New Program



**BUY
RECYCLED**

By purchasing a product made with recycled content, you're ensuring a demand for goods made from recycled materials, creating and sustaining jobs and conserving natural resources for future generations. All this by simply purchasing some of the thousands of quality recycled products on the market today, such as paper, clothing, packaging and more! Those little arrows point all of us in the right direction when it comes to recycling.

When launching a new program, it is essential to generate excitement about the program and convey accurate information. Be sure your plan includes resident notification and reminders, signage, special events and use of County volunteers. The County's Division of Solid Waste Services can provide assistance and materials to help your new program get started. Call **(240) 777-6400**.

-  Give recycling education materials to all new residents when they sign leases or with condominium documents.
-  Feature an article about your recycling program in your newsletter. Include information about how much material was collected, along with friendly reminders about recycling do's and don'ts. Print your newsletter on recycled paper and be sure to mark the paper as having "recycled content."
-  As you monitor your program, place new signage or labels where needed to prevent contamination.
-  Encourage recycling with a chart or banner that shows how much material has been recycled to date, and provide prizes or recycling incentives to recognize successful participation.
-  Hold an art contest to design a recycling poster. Post all entries to promote recycling.
-  Each year, distribute a flyer with recycling do's and don'ts as a reminder about proper preparation.
-  Each year, conduct a recycling survey to help assess your residents' attitudes toward recycling.
-  Display recycling posters in your offices to remind those who stop by that recycling is important.
-  Conduct periodic recycling pep rallies to educate residents about how well they're recycling and encourage enthusiasm and continued efforts. This can be part of a regular association or tenant meetings or scheduled separately. County staff is available to assist with or conduct these sessions.

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Launching a New Program

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Three weeks before launch:

- Distribute a door hanger or flyer to each household to announce the recycling program and the starting date.
- Display recycling posters in common areas to let people know about the program and when it will start.
- Organize a “green team” of volunteers who can promote the program to their neighbors.

One week before launch:

- Distribute a brochure or flyer with specific program information, such as what materials are required to be recycled, preparation instructions, and the location(s) of collection sites.
- Demonstrate program support, and include a short letter of endorsement from the tenants’ or owners’ association and top management.
- Hold a resident meeting or information session to explain the details of the program, and to address comments and concerns.
- Hold a “kick off” social gathering just before the program begins. To generate excitement, organize recycling guessing games, such as how many cans are in a full recycling bin or how much a pile of mixed paper weighs. Have a recycling craft table for children where they can make recycled sculptures from old buttons, yarn, toilet paper tubes, and fabric. Offer prizes made with recycled-content materials, such as pencils, t-shirts, and pads of recycled-content paper.

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Launching a New Program

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About two weeks after the program is underway:

- ♻️ Distribute a reminder flyer with recycling do's and don'ts.
- ♻️ Include a progress report in the flyer.

Ongoing Programs: Line up Staff Support



Your staff can be recycling ambassadors who answer questions and help promote your program. However, it is important to formally train your staff and periodically retrain them so they pass along only the most complete and accurate information to your residents. The County can provide this training to help you. **Reminder:** Management and staff are welcome to attend a recycling seminar offered by the County on various dates throughout the year. For information, please call the Division of Solid Waste Services at **(240) 777-6400**.

Line Up Volunteer Support



The County's Recycling Volunteer Program can provide trained citizen volunteers and help recruit and train new volunteers at your property. This core group of trained volunteers who are enthusiastic about recycling can also help promote your program. Volunteers can be "building or floor captains" who check in with residents in their building or on their floors, inform people about the program, answer questions, and provide a personal and "neighborly" touch. They can also help staff by checking recycling containers for contaminants and assist residents who may have difficulty carrying recyclables to the collection area.

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Use County Resources



The TRRAC training seminars for property managers are helpful for both sharing ideas and keeping up-to-date on recycling requirements.

Montgomery County's Division of Solid Waste Services offers a variety of resources and services that can help you with your recycling and waste reduction program. These include:

- ♻️ Technical assistance from staff who can help set up your program, solve problems, or suggest ways to improve your program. Call **(240) 777-6400** to schedule an appointment for an on-site consultation.
- ♻️ Residents' Guide to Recycling (available in English and Spanish).
- ♻️ Posters that encourage residents to recycle.
- ♻️ Labels for containers.
- ♻️ A recycling brochure in different languages for residents that can be reproduced, showing do's and don'ts.
- ♻️ Training seminars for property managers and special events for residents.
- ♻️ Volunteer training for "building or floor captains".
- ♻️ Complaint investigation and follow up.
- ♻️ Information on recycling on the County's Web site, **www.montgomerycountymd.gov/recycling**.
- ♻️ A recycling video that motivates residents to recycle and explains how (available in English or Spanish).
- ♻️ Apartment-sized "baby blue bins" at no additional cost.
- ♻️ Property Manager's Guide to Recycling and other resource materials.

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Know Your Residents and Promote Your Program

Some Common Problems and Their Solutions



Problem: Plastic bags, bottle caps, or other contaminants are in recycling containers.

Solution: Place additional signage in collection areas and on recycling containers to show what items cannot be recycled. Inform residents about which materials are not recyclable in the next newsletter or resident flyer. Place a specially marked container for plastic bags next to collection containers for recyclables so that residents can empty the recyclables into the container and properly dispose of the plastic bag.

Problem: Recyclables are in the trash.

Solution: Make sure recycling collection containers are conveniently located. Provide maps if some residents might not know container locations. Remind residents in the next newsletter or resident flyer that recycling is mandatory! Mobilize the building/floor captains or “green team” to help solve the problem.

Problem: Participation is low.

Solution: Survey residents to find out why. Are residents finding it difficult to carry recyclables to the collection areas? Are preparation instructions unclear? Distribute a flyer stressing the importance of recycling. Remind residents in the newsletter. Consider incentive awards and prizes. Have a recycling poster contest.

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Some Common Problems and Their Solutions *(continued)*

Problem: Some residents do not speak or read English.

Solution: Montgomery County has recycling information available in Spanish and other languages. In addition, the County's posters and other handouts use graphics and illustrations to show what materials can be recycled. To receive these materials, call **(240) 777-6400**.

Problem: Enhancing my property's recycling program has significantly added to my costs.

Solution: Talk to County staff who can help you evaluate your current collection contract and give you tips on making recycling more cost effective. You may also wish to speak with your recycling contractor about your concerns or seek additional bids to make sure your contract is competitive.

Problem: You've received complaints from residents that the recyclables are collected together with trash, also called "load mixing."

Solution: Contact County staff to help you educate your residents to reduce contamination. The County can also help you work with your waste collector to ensure that you are receiving proper service.