

How to Start a Beverage Container Recycling Program at School

California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery

1-800-Recycle

www.CalRecycle.ca.gov

Large or small, a beverage container recycling program can help your school earn money, help the environment, and cut waste hauling costs simultaneously. The beverage containers that you recycle are kept out of the landfills and can be made into new products. This pamphlet will provide a general framework for planning and implementing a beverage container recycling program. Each school may need to modify the guidelines to meet its special needs. Feel free to use the checklist included in this brochure as a guide.

1. Form a team

Establishing and operating a beverage container recycling program requires the cooperation and participation of many different people. To facilitate this, we encourage you to establish a committee of representatives that will be involved in the program. The committee should include the school principal, teachers, students, custodial staff and parents. We also recommend the committee select a recycling coordinator who can provide guidance and leadership, address questions, develop goals and make vital decisions. The recycling coordinator is responsible for coordinating the program, resolving problems and is the key contact person for reporting issues. The success of your program relies heavily on choosing a reliable recycling coordinator who is willing to make a commitment.

2. Determine your program goals

Determining the goals of your program, whether financial, educational or both, will assist you in determining the type of recycling program that best suits the needs of your school.

3. Decide on the type of program or programs you will use

- In-school collection system – a permanent, in-school collection center for beverage containers generated at home or at school: This program requires a storage space at school for beverage containers and frequent pickup by a local certified recycling center.

- Dropoff program: Recycle bins are placed in a convenient location for members of the community and school to donate their beverage containers on an on-going basis.
- Recycling drive: Similar to a drop off program except that collection occurs over a shorter period of time. Bins are set up on campus during the selected period of time, the drive is advertised to the community, and beverage containers are dropped off and then taken to a certified recycling center.
- “Adopt-a-school program: Ask a local certified recycling center to set up an account under your school’s name which allows the community to donate beverage containers for your school. You won’t have to monitor bins or transport containers.

4. Decide what to recycle

In deciding whether to collect aluminum, glass, plastic or bi-metal beverage containers, you should consider:

- What materials do you throw out most often?
- Aluminum beverage containers can be compacted, requiring less storage space.
- Some beverage containers may have a better market value per pound than others due to supply and demand.
- Plastic beverage containers may be bulky to store.
- Glass beverage container collection may pose safety issues due to glass breakage

5. Design the collection, transportation, and storage system

- Before getting started, you should contact CalRecycle to assist you in designing your collection program. Assistance may also be available from your local certified recycling center. You can reach staff and find out where your nearest recycling center is by calling 1-800-RECYCLE.
- Determine how many bins you need and where they should be placed. Consider placing bins where people purchase or consume their beverages (vending machines, sales counters, in the lunch room and next to trash cans).
- Determine the type of bins you will need for your beverage container collection. You can contact the Department at 1-800-RECYCLE to help you decide on bins and get information on the grant funds available to help you pay for the equipment and supplies needed for your program.
- Assign a recycling monitor in each class to watch for contaminants and to disseminate new information. Assign a monitor to watch over the lunchroom bins too.
- The recycling monitors should be responsible for removing trash from each recycle bin prior to taking the collected beverage containers to the central storage area on a daily or weekly basis. Monitors should also replace the bin liners, if needed.

- Arrange a central storage area for the beverage containers to accumulate before transporting them to a certified recycling center. Make sure your materials are either in a bin or storage area that can be locked.
- Collection and transportation of your beverage containers can be facilitated by your local certified collection recycling center, waste hauler, environmental or and storage personnel or parents. If you decide to transport the beverage containers to your local certified system recycling center, have the environmental or booster club use volunteer transportation; or if available, have your custodial staff use a school-owned vehicle. You could also arrange for the local certified recycling center or waste hauler to provide pick-up service. If a recycler is picking up the beverage containers from your school, they may require a minimum amount before pickup. Ask the recycler how they prefer that your team sort the beverage containers.
- For drop off, recycling drive and event programs, use garbage dumpsters, boxes, bags or any other type of bin that is large and easy to empty. Bins can be located in a parking lot, near the school athletic field or at any other location that makes it convenient for people to drop off their beverage containers.

6. Education and train the team

- The recycling team must have a good understanding of the beverage container recycling program. Each member must understand how it operates and their role.

7. Become certified

- Once your school has decided to establish a beverage container recycling program, please contact the Certification Section to receive information on becoming certified as a Community Service Program. Being certified will allow you to redeem beverage containers at certified recycling centers above the consumer limits or take your material directly to a processor: The Certification Section may be reached at 1-800-RECYCLE. Additional information and a copy of the Certification Application may be found on our website: www.CalRecycle.ca.gov

8. Provide recycling instructions

- Place instructions near all the collection bins so that people know what to recycle and in which bin to place their items. To help identify beverage container recycling bins, the Department has produced bin labels. Recycling bin labels are available on our website Bottlesandcans.com under Posters & Stickers.

9. Promote your recycling program

- The most important way to get everyone to participate in your program is to let them know about it. To promote your program, create flyers explaining how recycling will work at your school and distribute them to all the students and teachers.

- You may want to provide incentives for participation such as: A competition between classes, grade levels or schools, with an award such as a circulating trophy that could be given to the group that collects the most beverage containers during the year. -Offer a reward when the bins are filled to capacity within a predetermined amount of time. -Designate a purpose for the funds that are raised. Announce at the beginning of the program what the earnings will be used to purchase.

10. Monitor and evaluate the program

Evaluate your school's collection program on a regular basis to make sure it remains effective and efficient. Tracking the weight of beverage containers you redeem each month will enable you to see increases and decreases in the volume you recycle.

Remember that costs and revenues are not the only indicator of a successful recycling program. Your school will save money because it will cost less to haul away your waste without beverage containers that would have been thrown in the garbage.

Recycling Program Checklist

- Form a team
- Determine the program goals
- Decide on the type of program or programs you will use
- Decide which beverage containers to recycle
- Decide how to collect the beverage containers
- Decide how to transport the beverage containers
- Decide where you are going to store your collected beverage containers
- Contact the Department or your local certified recycling center for information that will help you design your program
- Educate and train the team
- Become certified
- Place instructions near all the collection bins so that people know what to recycle and in which bin to place their items
- Develop a promotional program and decide what incentives you will use to encourage participation
- Begin recycling!