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LINEN MANAGEMENT

System Review

The first step to any successful work environment for your Linen Management System is an assessment of the current system, its strength and weaknesses, and how the laundry/linen department can more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of the customers. This assessment can be accomplished through a systems review.

As laundry/linen managers, you need to identify your customers and how you can better serve their needs.

Purpose of a Systems Review

- (1) To open lines of communication with nursing regarding their requirements.
- (2) Become proactive rather than reactive by anticipating situations and addressing them before problems arise.

Customer Examples

- (1) *Nursing*: Provide the proper products and the quality of service to allow them to do their job effectively.
- (2) *Materials Management*: Balancing of supply (inventory) and demand (usage).
- (3) *Purchasing*: Provide a systematic and logical approach to linen procurement.
- (4) *Patient*: Provide the best possible patient/resident comfort and care through clean, quality products.
- (5) *Administration*: To provide the best possible service and quality at the lowest possible cost to remain within budgetary guidelines.
- (6) *Staff*: To provide a safe and productive work environment for your employees and the ability to statistically justify the existence of your department.
- (7) *Security*: Implement procedures to prevent or discourage linen loss.

Action Steps

- (1) *Solicit linen vendor assistance*. Ask your primary linen vendor to assist you in conducting a system review. If your vendor does not offer this service, proceed on your own.
- (2) *Gain support of the Director of Nursing*. Meet with the Director of Nursing and discuss your desire to improve the overall service to the nursing floors. Make certain that you obtain approval before you proceed.
- (3) *Interview nursing personnel*. Set up 15-minute meetings with representatives from each major linen-using department. Interview unit heads and personnel who actually work with the linen, make and change beds, and provide patient care. Be sure to stress that this discussion will lead to action. The most critical aspect of a successful interview is to be open to (not defensive of) changes identified as necessary by nursing staff.

(4) *Focus on service issues*. During these initial meetings, focus on issues which will help service your customers' needs.

(5) *Evaluate service perception*. After compiling data from all departments, you will need to evaluate your services to determine if you are meeting your customers' requirements. If not, you will need to establish an action plan to address these requirements. If you need assistance, contact fellow ALM members and ask how they met similar requirements in their facilities. Also, solicit ideas from your primary linen supplier.

(6) *Implement changes within 30 days*. Because you have committed to action, it is important nursing staff sees some changes/improvements within one month from the time of the interview. You may want to begin with a change which will have the greatest impact on the majority of departments, e.g., a change in the cart delivery schedule. You may also want to focus on the user areas with the most concerns.

(7) *Focus on usage/abuse issues*. After you have begun to make service improvements, you will have built credibility with the nursing staff. It is now time to solicit their help. Focus on issues of concern to the laundry/linen department and how nursing can partner with you to address linen utilization, misuse, and abuse.

(8) *Linen Committee review*. After collecting and consolidating your observations, share this information with the Linen Committee. At this point, action plans can be developed to address identified usage and abuse issues.

(9) *Weekly department visits (MBWA = Management By Walking Around)*. To maintain open communication with your customers, make nursing unit visits a weekly part of your job. If weekly visits are not possible or you are an off-site laundry, be sure to visit no less than monthly. It only takes a few moments to visit with each department head. The benefits of being visible to your customers will pay dividends when you try to implement changes to make your department more productive and reduce overall costs.

Sample Interview Questions

Answer these questions with a yes or no and give detailed comments to improve your linen system.

1. Is the linen delivered at an acceptable time?
2. Is the amount of product received adequate? If not explain.
3. Are there items on the cart that you no longer use?
4. Are there items you would like to receive that you do not currently receive? If yes, what items?
5. How would you describe the quality of the products received? Excellent, good, fair, or poor?
6. Is the soiled pick-up service at an acceptable time?
7. Are you aware of our facility discard policy?
8. If not, what do you do with the unacceptable linens?
9. Are you currently evaluating any specialty linen products to replace standard products currently used?
10. What is your bed-changing schedule?
11. Are you aware of a facility bed make-up and/or bed change policy?
12. If you could add any product to your product mix, what would that product be?
13. What suggestions do you have for improvement?

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