

Station Implementation Tips - Laundry and Linen

1. Set-Up
 - a. Gather all:
 - a. Supplies- various sized gloves and gowns, alcohol-based hand rub/hand sanitizer, various types of linen, trash bags, or other containers for nursing staff to put soiled linens in, large container to put bags of soiled linens in, bed
 - b. Teaching materials- handouts, competency checklists, quiz copies
2. Provide a short overview of why safe laundry and linen handling is important
3. Demonstrate how to properly handle contaminated linens
4. Perform handling of contaminated linen competency validation with each staff member and document results on competency checklist.
 - a. Consider setting up a room simulation – have staff remove contaminated linens from the bed and carry it to a large container to put them in. Then have staff make up the bed with clean linens.
 - i. Vary the scenarios – say bed linen soiled with feces, or resident is on Contact precautions, have “soiled” linen on floor or on top of trash can
 - b. If staff member did not successfully complete the competency:
 - i. Provide and document remedial education
 - ii. Repeat competency validation and document results
 - c. Administer linen handling quiz-keep completed quizzes in education file

Nursing Competency Checklist

Laundry and Linen Handling

Required Step	Competent - Yes	Competent - No
Hand hygiene is performed and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is put on before handling soiled linens		
Soiled/contaminated linen is handled with minimum agitation to avoid contamination of air, surfaces and people.		
Linens are not placed on the floor		
Soiled/contaminated linen is bagged at the point of use		
Soiled/contaminated linen is not carried against the body during handling or transport		
Soiled/contaminated linen is placed in designated containers		
PPE is removed and hand hygiene is performed after handling soiled/ contaminated linen		

Comments or follow up actions:

Staff Signature

Validator Signature/Date

Adapted from HQIN Laundry Handling Checklist

https://hqin.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Laundry-Handling-Checklist_rev08.13.24.pdf

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TIPS FOR MEETING THE LINEN REQUIREMENTS IN SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

The proper handling, storing, processing, and transporting of all linens and laundry is necessary to produce hygienically clean laundry and reduce the risk of spreading infections in LTC.^{1,2} The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) regulations³ require facilities to develop policies and procedures to educate staff about linens and laundry services that address how personnel must “handle, store, process, and transport linen so as to prevent the spread of infection.” CMS Surveyors will review the facilities’ policy and procedures about linen and laundry handling.⁴ The facility must monitor to ensure that the laundry practices are implemented, any deviations from practices should be identified, and corrective actions are put in place.

We have listed some tips to meeting the components of the regulatory requirements based on a review of common reasons facilities are cited for non-compliance with linens regulations.

Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when handling linens

To protect all staff including nursing and housekeeping from contaminants during laundry operations, they must use PPE.

TIP: Ensure staff practice hand hygiene before putting on (i.e. donning) and after removal of PPE (i.e. doffing) but particularly after removal of gloves.

TIP: Wear tear-resistant gloves when handling and laundering soiled linens.

TIP: If there is risk of splashing (e.g. if laundry is washed by hand) when laundering soiled linens, staff should in addition to gowns and gloves always wear face protection (e.g. face shield, goggles).

TIP: Removal of PPE should be done in the resident’s room or laundry room not outside in hallway, nurses station or some other common area.

Linen and Laundry Handling

Staff should handle all used laundry as potentially contaminated and use standard precautions (e.g. gloves, gowns when sorting and rinsing).

TIP: Always wear gloves before handling linen (e.g. bed sheets, towels) and change them between residents and wash your hands after removing the gloves.

TIP: Never move or carry soiled linen against the body. Always place it in the designated container to prevent spread onto the staff’s clothing or gowns.

¹ CDC Linen and Laundry Management. https://www.cdc.gov/hai/prevent/resource-limited/laundry.html#anchor_1585333789098

² CDC Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities: recommendation of the CDC Healthcare Infection Control Practice Advisory Committee (HICPAC) July 2019 Section G Laundry and Linens pg. 113 to 119. available at <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/environmental-guidelines-P.pdf>

³ eCFR :: 42 CFR 483.80 -- Infection control. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-42/chapter-IV/subchapter-G/part-483/subpart-B/section-483.80>

⁴ See CMS State Operating Manual Appendix PP from 2-3-23 available at <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/provider-enrollment-and-certification/guidanceforlawsandregulations/downloads/appendix-pp-state-operations-manual.pdf>

TIPS FOR MEETING THE LINEN REQUIREMENTS IN SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

Linen and Laundry Handling (cont.)

TIP: Carefully roll up soiled linen to prevent contamination of the air, surfaces, staff, and/or residents. Do not shake linen! Moving or shaking linens can aerosolize pathogens causing spread to others or contamination of the environment.

TIP: Do not sort and rinse contaminated laundry at the point of use, in hallways, or other open resident care spaces as this increases the risk of spread and contamination. It should be done in the designated laundry room area.

TIP: Make sure contaminated laundry is bagged or contained at the point of collection (e.g. location where it was used) not in the entry way or hallway. This will reduce the risk spreading pathogens elsewhere in the facility or to others.

TIP: Place soiled linen into a clearly labeled, leak-proof container (e.g. bag) in the resident care area. Do not transport soiled linen by hand outside the specific resident care area from where it was removed. Make sure all containers and bags are leak proof.

Transport of Laundry

The facility practices must include how staff will handle and transport the laundry with appropriate measures to prevent cross-contamination.

TIP: Make sure contaminated linen and laundry bags are not held against your body when transporting.

TIP: Clean linens and resident clothes must be transported by methods (e.g. covered or bagged or in container) that ensure cleanliness and protect from dust and soil during intra or inter-facility loading, transport, and unloading.

TIP: Separate carts must be used for transporting clean from contaminated linen. If this is not possible, the contaminated linen cart should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected per facility protocol before being used to move clean linens. Regardless, clean linens and contaminated linens should never be transported or stored at the same time on a single cart.

TIP: All contaminated linen carts must be cleaned and disinfected whenever visibly soiled and according to a schedule developed by the facility.

TIP: Clean resident's laundry should not be stored in the laundry room with dirty or soiled linens and when transporting resident's clean laundry, it should be done to prevent contamination such as use of covers or in a container (e.g. bag, box, or drawer).

TIPS FOR MEETING THE LINEN REQUIREMENTS IN SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

Linen Storage

TIP: Clean linen must always be kept separate from contaminated linen. The use of separate rooms, closets, or other designated spaces with a closing door provides the most secure methods for reducing the risk of accidental contamination.

TIP: Ensure the door remains closed when not in use, and that the clean linen room is not easily accessible by residents or visitors.

TIP: Linens must be stored in room or cart that have a cover over the clean linens at all times to prevent getting contaminated while waiting to be used.

TIP: Make sure that linen carts are kept closed after linens are removed for use to help prevent contamination of the remaining clean linens while the cart is being moved, stored, or waiting for use between residents.

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Quiz: Laundry and Linen Handling

Name_____

1. Linen from transmission-based precaution rooms can be placed in the same laundry basket as other linens.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. Which of the following statements about collecting and transporting used linen are true?
 - A. Linen should be precleaned at the point of use (e.g., resident room) to help
 - B. Prevent permanent staining
 - C. Soiled and wet linen should be double bagged to prevent leakage
 - D. Used linen should not be shaken or held close to the body
 - E. Hand hygiene and PPE are only necessary if linen is grossly soiled
3. True or False: Between use for residents, staff may leave linen carts open after clean linens are removed.
4. When removing soiled linen from the bed:
 - A. Roll linens away from you into a ball prior to bagging
 - B. Roll linens towards your clothing so you have better control of them
 - C. Bag the soiled linen in the hallway where the linen hamper is located
 - D. Place the soiled linen on top of the trash can prior to bagging
5. True or False: Residents and visitors should have easy access to clean linen rooms.

Quiz Answer Key: Linen Handling

1. A
2. C
3. False
4. A
5. False

Laundry Handling Checklist

Name:

Date:

Location/Unit:

Prevention Component	Practice Performed			Comments
	Yes	No	N/A	
Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is worn when handling soiled/contaminated linen.	☐	☐	☐	
Hand hygiene is performed and gloves are put on before handling soiled linens.	☐	☐	☐	
Soiled/contaminated linen is not carried against the body during handling or transport.	☐	☐	☐	
Soiled/contaminated linen is placed in designated containers.	☐	☐	☐	
Linens are not placed on the floor.	☐	☐	☐	
Soiled/contaminated linen is handled with minimum agitation to avoid contamination of air, surfaces and people.	☐	☐	☐	
Soiled/contaminated linen is bagged or contained at the point of use.	☐	☐	☐	
Soiled/contaminated linen is placed in leak-resistant bags or containers.	☐	☐	☐	
Soiled linen is double-bagged when wet, or when soiling creates the need.	☐	☐	☐	
Bags or containers for linen contaminated with blood are identified with labels or color coding.	☐	☐	☐	
Linen containers are not over-filled.	☐	☐	☐	
Linen containers are tied securely and laundered after each use. <i>Note: soiled linen bags can be laundered with the soiled linen they contained, but should be emptied of their contents prior to laundering</i>	☐	☐	☐	
Carts or linen containers are regularly cleaned (e.g., at least once daily) with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectants .	☐	☐	☐	

Prevention Component	Practice Performed			Comments
	Yes	No	N/A	
If laundry chute is in use, laundry bags are closed with no loose items. Loose items are not put in chute.	☐	☐	☐	
Contaminated linen is bagged/contained where collected and sorted/rinsed only in the contaminated laundry area.	☐	☐	☐	
There is dedicated space for laundering soiled linen.	☐	☐	☐	
Designated laundering area has an entrance for bringing in soiled linen ("dirty" area) for processing and a separate exit for removing clean linen.	☐	☐	☐	
Designated laundering area has a schedule for routine cleaning of both soiled and clean linen handling areas, as well as routine cleaning of vents and removal of lint accumulation.	☐	☐	☐	
Designated laundering area has floors and walls made of durable materials that can withstand the exposures of the area (e.g., large quantities of water and steam).	☐	☐	☐	
Handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer and an eye wash station is available in the laundry area.	☐	☐	☐	
Hands are washed after handling soiled/contaminated linen.	☐	☐	☐	
No food, beverages or personal items are in the laundry area.	☐	☐	☐	
Gowns or aprons and face protection (face shield or goggles) are worn by laundry staff when laundering soiled linens, if there is a risk of splashing.	☐	☐	☐	
Instructions from the washer/dryer manufacturer are followed.	☐	☐	☐	
Hot water (at least 160 degrees F) and an approved laundry detergent are used.	☐	☐	☐	
There is a designated area with separation between soiled/contaminated linen and clean linen storage	☐	☐	☐	
Hands are washed before handling clean linen.	☐	☐	☐	

Prevention Component	Practice Performed			Comments
	Yes	No	N/A	
Clean linen is packaged and transported by methods that will ensure their cleanliness and protect them from dust and soil during transport (i.e., clean bags or designated covered clean linen cart). <i>State regulations and/or accrediting standards may dictate the procedures for this activity.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
Linens taken into patient rooms are not returned to cart even if they have not been used.	☐	☐	☐	
Clean linen is stored by methods that will ensure their cleanliness and protect them from dust and soil during storage (i.e., separate store room with closed door or if stored in cart in hallway, cart is covered at all times). <i>State regulations and/or accrediting standards may dictate the procedures for this activity.</i>	☐	☐	☐	
Clean linen carts have a solid bottom.	☐	☐	☐	
The lower shelf of linen storage carts are at least 6 inches from the floor.	☐	☐	☐	
Clean linen dropped on the floor is considered soiled laundry and placed with the soiled laundry.	☐	☐	☐	
Clean personal laundry is returned to the correct patient/resident.	☐	☐	☐	

Use N/A if (a) non-applicable or (b) not assessed.

General Comments