Case Study

Title: An Effective Linen Committee Reduces Scrub Purchases

Facility: The Chester County Hospital, West Chester, PA

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OBJECTIVE

The Chester County Hospital, a 234 bed facility located in West Chester, Pennsylvania, has been expanding each year with new projects. To keep up with their growth and to manage costs, the hospital partnered with Standard Textile to form a linen committee. The focus of the committee was to control scrub replacement costs while maintaining service quality to the end users.

STRATEGY

Due to the availability of scrubs being an issue, the Linen Committee decided to update and formalize their scrub / uniform policy. The Committee wanted to make sure key personnel were on the team to ensure no areas were overlooked. The Linen Committee team consisted of the following:

- Director of OR
- Director of ED
- Nursing (patient care and ancillary)
- Linen Manager
- Director of EVS
- Representatives from Standard Textile
- Security (as needed)

The Linen Committee, lead by the Linen / Laundry Manager discussed how the group would embark upon the project. The team agreed that the project should be completed in three phases.

Phase 1 – Review / Update Policy

The Committee reviewed their existing scrub / uniform policy. The committee was asked to review the policy and make recommended changes before the next linen committee meeting. As a group, the Committee implemented the changes and added new elements they felt were necessary to the policy. The new policy included a situation where if an unauthorized user soiled their uniform, there would be an exchange program. The Linen Committee examined all scenarios to make sure that nothing was overlooked. The new policy was written to meet infection control standards that are part of their Joint Commission accreditation. In fact, the team
checked AORN and OSHA references to review their guidelines on scrub / uniform policies. Once completed, Infection Control and the Senior VP of Medical Affairs reviewed and signed off on the policy.

**Phase 2 – Authorized Users**

After the policy was complete, the Linen Committee’s next challenge was to collectively determine a list of departments that would be allowed to wear scrubs. These departments would be considered authorized users. The authorized areas consisted of Surgical Services, Endoscopy Interventional Radiology, Cardiac Catheterization Suites, and Maternal/Child Health Departments. Any staff member not working in the authorized departments were told to discontinue wearing The Chester County Hospital issued scrubs. All unauthorized users were asked to return hospital owned scrubs via the soiled laundry bags.

**Phase 3 – Implementation**

The third and final phase of the project dealt with how the team was going to implement the new policy. The Linen Committee was asked to come up with several ideas that would help launch their new policy and with ways to get the word out to all hospital staff. The Committee brainstormed several ideas for implementing the policy. The first idea was to present the new policy at the nurse managers meeting. This happened two months before the implementation date. Since the Linen Committee consisted of directors of departments such as the OR, ER, Cath Lab, and Radiology, word was already out about the new upcoming change. A month before the implementation, huge laminated posters were displayed by employee entrances stating the “new scrub policy is coming”. The posters explained who was allowed to wear scrubs and when the new policy would take effect. In addition, an article in “The Pulse”, The Chester County Hospital’s news update was published regarding the new policy. Two weeks before the launch, the hospital sent out a letter with employee paychecks reiterating the change. The letter touched on who is authorized to wear scrubs, what to do if your uniform or personal clothing becomes soiled, and that effective immediately no employee is allowed to obtain scrubs from the Linen / Laundry Room.

**RESULTS**

After the rollout of the new policy, the Linen Committee team set up measures to ensure that the scrub / uniform policy continued to work properly. The team involved Security to make sure that no staff member enters or leaves the facility with hospital owned scrubs. If in fact an incident occurs, the security guard will take the offender’s name and area they work in, and report it to the Linen / Laundry Manager. The Laundry Manager will then send an email to the employee’s director where action will take place. The Chester County Hospital has a no tolerance policy, especially for this new policy. If an employee has more than one occurrence, disciplinary action will follow. In addition to security, the team decided that spot checks would be made by several individuals of the Linen Committee. Random checks of different entrances are made to ensure that employees are following the new guidelines.
As a result of the hard work and cooperation of the Linen Committee team, The Chester County Hospital was able to formalize and implement an effective scrub / uniform policy. The hospital was able to reduce scrub purchases from $11,898 in FY2006 to $3,582 in FY2007. This 70% decrease has saved and will continue to save The Chester County Hospital approximately $8,316 per year.

CONCLUSION

Although The Chester County Hospital scrub purchases were already lower than industry benchmarks, the hospital was still able to reduce scrub purchasing costs. By having the proper resources and members on the team, an effective Linen Committee can reduce scrub purchases. A diversified team with different levels of responsibility adds great value to the Committee. Having support from administration is a key factor to the success of the Committee.