Case Study

Title: Implementation of “As Needed” Linen Utilization Policy Reduces Pounds Utilized Per Patient Activity

Facility: Midwest Region

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BACKGROUND

A healthcare provider in the Midwest Region consisting of several facilities providing a wide range of medical services including acute care, rehabilitation and home health care has been actively working with Standard Textile over the past several years on various initiatives to reduce overall pounds utilized per patient day. The Healthcare System focused these initiatives at the two main acute care facilities in the system, a Medical Center and a Hospital licensed for 488 and 292 beds respectively, because they contain the majority of the patient beds and they utilize 90% of the linen processed. These initiatives have included the following:

- Installing and effectively utilizing the ControlTex Linen Management System
- Adjusting System Par Levels
- Forming a Linen Committee
- Conducting Facility Audits
- Conducting individual meetings with nurse managers and EVS to review audit results, ControlTex linen usage information and discuss linen utilization best practices.
- Implementing a linen reject/discard program
- Facilitating linen awareness/education events
- Implementing a Unit Cost Allocation Program
- Developing a custom usage per activity report that calculates potential cost savings and providing this information to nurse managers.

Since Year 1, the Healthcare System has been able to consistently reduce the pounds utilized per patient day at both facilities through an effective implementation of the initiatives listed above which has resulted in significant savings along the way. The following table outlines the reduction in pounds per patient day each year and the corresponding savings in overall processing cost achieved with the reductions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility/Year</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Center</td>
<td>29.61</td>
<td>29.38</td>
<td>26.60</td>
<td>26.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>31.92</td>
<td>28.97</td>
<td>28.22</td>
<td>28.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linen Processing Cost Savings</td>
<td>$65,106</td>
<td>$167,197</td>
<td>$128,606</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total savings in processing costs achieved since Year 1 amounts to **$360,908**. This tangible savings in linen processing costs can be attributed to a continuous effort to implement linen utilization best practices system wide and educate linen end users about these best practices.

**OBJECTIVE**

Even though the Healthcare System had achieved a significant amount of success reducing pounds utilized per patient day at both the Medical Center and the Hospital, both facilities remained above the established national benchmark for this key performance indicator. The Healthcare System wanted to close the gap between their current performance in this category and the national benchmark to achieve their overall goal of reducing the pounds utilized per patient activity while maintaining excellent service and care to their patients. To achieve this goal, the Healthcare System developed and implemented an “As Needed” Linen Utilization Policy.

**STRATEGY**

To develop and implement the “As Needed” Linen Utilization Policy, the Healthcare System created a linen management team consisting of members from Materials Management, EVS, Nursing, Laundry/Linen Services and textile management consultants from Standard Textile. The team understood this policy would impact several different areas within the system. To ensure the successful launch and compliance of the new policy, a comprehensive strategy was developed. The strategy consisted of a phased approach involving data collection, analysis, education and implementation.

To gain a better understanding of the current linen utilization practices within each facility, a complete facility audit was conducted at each location. The facility audits consisted of the following components:

- **Benchmark Analysis** – A comparison of current key performance indicators to established benchmarks.
- **Departmental Surveys** – A twenty-question survey completed by linen end users to assess linen utilization habits and any service or product quality issues.
- **Onsite observations and interviews with linen end users**
- **Clean Linen Discharge Analysis** – An analysis tool used to quantify the expense associated with bringing excess clean linen into the patient rooms.
The data collected during the facility audit was reviewed and thoroughly analyzed by Standard Textile. Once an analysis of the collected data was complete, a report was generated and presented to the linen management team. The linen management team discussed the results of the facility analysis at length and created an educational presentation that was used to present the results of the facility audits to Nursing and EVS managers. The core of the presentation consisted of the following findings:

- **Benchmark analysis** - Both the Medical Center and Hospital were over the National Benchmark for pounds utilized per patient day.
- **Bed Change Policy** – The majority of respondents indicated the sheets were changed daily, 25% of respondents indicated blankets were changed daily.
- **Bed Makeup Standard** – Approximately 65% of respondents indicated underpads were part of the standard bed makeup regardless of patient need.
- **Clean Linen Discharge Analysis** – An average of 3.5 pounds of clean unused linen was found in each room audited. Over 100 rooms were part of the clean linen discharge analysis.

Based on the results of the facility analysis and feedback from the managers during the educational presentations, an “As Needed” Linen Utilization Policy was developed. The main components of the policy addressed the following areas:

- **Bed Changing Frequency** – Bed linens will be straightened each day and sheets, pillowcases, and blankets will be changed as needed or if requested.
- **Standard Bed/Room Makeup** - A basic bed makeup will consist of the following:
  - (1) Fitted Sheet, (1) Flat Sheet, (1) Pillowcase, and (1) Pillow
  - Gowns, towels, and washcloths will be provided on a daily basis.
  - Blankets and underpads will be provided as needed.
- **Extra linen is not to be brought into the patient room for storage or convenience**

The policy was submitted to administration for approval. Once the policy was approved, an education program was developed to in-service linen end users on the new policy. Hospital administration wanted to ensure patient satisfaction remained high, so a patient information card was created to educate all patients about the new policy. This card is displayed on the bed stand in all patient rooms.

**PATIENT INFORMATION**

For your comfort, we straighten bed linens each day and change bed sheets, pillowcases and blankets as needed. Bed changes can be performed more frequently at your request.

We also provide a clean towel, washcloth and patient gown each day, or more often if you wish. Please let us know your linen needs.
RESULTS

The “As Needed” Linen Utilization Policy went into effect in October of Year 4 and has been in place ever since. Overall, the policy has been a success and has achieved the primary goal of reducing pounds utilized per patient day while maintaining excellent service and care to their patients.

Since the new policy has been put into effect, the Healthcare System has experienced minimal complaints from patients. The complaints they did receive were from older patients with an expectation that bed linens should be changed every day regardless of need and they should not have to request nursing to do so. The overwhelming majority of patients had no complaints about the policy.

The table below compares the pounds utilized per patient day for the time periods prior to and following the implementation of the “As Needed” Linen Utilization policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Year 4 (Jan. – Sept.)</th>
<th>Year 4 Oct.-Year 5 May</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Center</td>
<td>26.44</td>
<td>25.62</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>28.05</td>
<td>26.29</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>6%</td>
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The decrease in pounds utilized per patient day at both the Medical Center and Hospital for the period following Year 4 January through September can be attributed to the implementation of the new linen utilization policy. The new policy has resulted in a tangible eight-month savings of $38,437 in linen processing costs for the Healthcare System since the policy was put into effect. When comparing Year 1 figures to the figures for the period following the implementation of the new policy (Year 4 October – Year 5 May), the Healthcare System has achieved an overall tangible eight-month savings of $146,174 in linen processing costs.