Case Study

Title: Implementation of Best Linen Management Practices Results in a Reduction of Laundry-Linen Costs

BACKGROUND

Located in the Southeast Region, this Medical Center is a 500 bed, acute care facility. A level II trauma center, this facility provides a full range of services including open heart surgeries, imaging services, day surgeries, neurosciences, orthopedics and women’s services. This organization utilizes an outside, co-op laundry for processing its linen. The linen distribution department is responsible for managing the linen purchasing process as well as linen distribution tasks for this facility.

OBJECTIVE

The medical center’s primary objective was to implement best linen management practices that would enable the team to manage the linen distribution process and monitor linen utilization, circulating inventory levels and linen purchases. By implementing these programs, the linen department planned to improve customer satisfaction levels and reduce costs for the facility.

The goal of an effective linen distribution system is to facilitate the delivery of the right product quantities to the right place at the right time. Additionally, it is critical the products are of sufficient product quality to meet end user needs and facilitate high quality patient care.

STRATEGY

The linen distribution manager implemented the following strategies to achieve their goals:

Linen Distribution Programs

- Established linen delivery schedules for all units and began monitoring staff’s adherence to the schedules utilizing a daily delivery form.
- Published delivery schedules to nursing staff so customers would be aware of delivery times for their linen.
Implemented a log for tracking all phone calls from nursing staff requesting extra linen supplies.

Implemented ControlTex TMS and began tracking daily linen usage by department.

After collecting 30 days of accurate usage, the linen distribution manager adjusted their par levels utilizing the ControlTex Cart/Closet Stocking Level Report. The linen distribution manager met with nurse managers and utilized this report to negotiate par level revisions as needed. The linen distribution manager established a schedule for proactively reviewing and adjusting cart/closet stocking levels as needed.

The linen distribution manager implemented a process to perform inventories annually. The inventories were a collaborative effort between linen distribution, laundry, and hospital nursing staff. The linen distribution manager initiated the inventory planning and communications process 30 days prior to the actual inventory. She did an excellent job communicating roles, responsibilities and timeframes to all the applicable stakeholders. As a result of the pre-planning, the inventory was very successful. Following the inventory, the linen distribution manager entered inventory data into the ControlTex system along with injections and discards data.

The linen manager compared the inventory data to usage data to assess current par levels and determine linen ordering needs. She utilized this information to establish a planned purchasing system for her linen injections.

**Linen Control Programs**

The linen distribution manager worked with the Vice President of Nursing to recruit a linen management committee. Meeting quarterly, the team was tasked with the goal of designing and implementing best linen management practices throughout the facility.

Environmental Services conducted a clean linen discharge audit and shared the results of the assessment with the linen management committee. Committee members were encouraged to share the audit results with their staff and identify ways to reduce clean linen stockpiled in patient rooms on their units.

The linen distribution manager developed a clean linen discard program, purchased uniquely colored bags marked “reject linen” and worked with nursing staff to implement the program. Nursing staff were instructed to place substandard linen items in this discard bag, rather than the trash.

The linen committee designed a linen awareness event for the facility. The event provided information on laundry-linen costs along with best practices for reducing costs. Over 300 hospital personnel participated in the event.

The linen manager and the Emergency Department manager designed a process to control linen loss during ambulance transfers. They set up an EMS cart located by the ambulance entrance and educated EMS personnel on accessing their linen via the EMS cart. The linen manager added the EMS cart to their distribution schedule and restocked the cart twice daily to ensure there was a consistent supply of linen items available. The team stocked the EMS cart with substandard linen items. In addition, the Emergency Department staff secured clean utility rooms with access codes and instructed personnel that EMS personnel were only to access linen via the EMS cart.
RESULTS

As a result of the medical center’s commitment to implementing best linen management practices, the team achieved the following results:

Between fiscal years 2008 and 2009, they reduced their annual linen purchases from $796,682 to $580,005, which represents a 26% improvement!

Cost Savings Achievement: $216,677

CONCLUSION

The medical center did an excellent job with formulating its goals and objectives, developing a plan with input from key stakeholders, communicating the plan to end users, and following through on executing the programs. The common denominator was accurate data collection. By collecting accurate and reliable information, the linen distribution manager was able to make educated decisions about their linen system and present a factual, well supported and professional business case for these programs to elicit nursing staff’s support.