Does The Joint Commission have specific requirements that address linen management, such as covering, storage and transport?

Any examples are for illustrative purposes only.

No, requirements for managing linen are not defined within The Joint Commission standards. Organizations are expected to develop their linen cleaning, storage and management requirements in accordance with evidence-based sources, such as the CDC, the National Association of Institutional Linen Management and/or the local or state authority having jurisdiction.

For example, the CDC's guidelines state, "Clean linen should be transported and stored by methods that will ensure its cleanliness." According to the NAILM, (National Association of Institutional Linen Management) the carts or hampers that deliver laundered linens must be cleaned prior to accepting processed linens. A clean liner within the cart is acceptable, and the linens should be covered. The guidelines state: "Carts that are going to be used to store linens on patient-care areas (hallways) must have covers on them during transportation and storage time. The covers shall protect the linens at all time during storage. They cannot be removed or adjusted in a manner that will expose linens to common traffic. Open carts that are going to be used just to dispense linens on patient- care areas need not be covered for this purpose. They cannot be used to store linens on the floors."

If an organization is unsure whether their linen management processes are compliant with such guidelines, conducting a risk assessment is a helpful way of identifying risks associated with various options being considered by the organization. A proactive risk assessment examines a process in detail including sequencing of events, actual and potential risks, and failure or points of vulnerability and that prioritizes, through a logical process, areas for improvement based on the actual or potential impact (that is, criticality) of care, treatment, or services provided.

The introductory section of the Leadership (LD) chapter provides an example of a pro-active risk assessment model that an organization may use. However, this specific approach is not mandated as there are other risk assessment tools available that may better meet the needs of the organization.

Last updated on June 07, 2024 with update notes of: Editorial changes only

First Published Date: March 28, 2017