

# HOSPITAL OVERSIGHT OF CONTRACT LAUNDRY SERVICES

## THE REQUIREMENT FOR HOSPITALS

To be eligible for reimbursement hospitals must be compliant with the Federal Medicare Conditions of Participation (CoP's). The CoP's contain the minimum health and safety requirements that hospitals must meet.

To confirm a hospital's compliance with the CoP's the hospital receives an unannounced survey conducted by a state survey agency on behalf of CMS, and/or one of three voluntary accreditation programs with deemed status<sup>i</sup>.

According to the CoP's the hospitals governing body is responsible for oversight of contracted services. The governing body must ensure that a contractor furnishes services in a manner consistent with acceptable standards of practice.

## THE IMPORTANCE

The importance for oversight of contracted laundry services was highlighted by a report presented in March 2010 at the Fifth Decennial International Conference on Healthcare-Associated Infections. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a situation described as "the perfect storm" involving services provided by a contracted health care laundry service.

An outbreak of Zygomycosis/Rhizopus centered around a cluster of cases resulting in the death of five pediatric patients. The abstract concluded that hospital linens were the most likely vehicle to have brought the Rhizopus in contact with patients who were susceptible to infections due to underlying medical conditions.

They reasoned that the linens could have become contaminated at the laundry facility, in route, or during delivery at the hospital. The final recommendations were that "hospital linens should be laundered, shipped, and stored in a manner that minimizes exposure to environmental contaminants."

*"ALM has always been an excellent resource for direction to industry standards, but combining all the references into one place will greatly reduce research time."*

Randy Wendland, CLLM  
HHA Services



§482.12(e) Standard:  
Contracted Services

The governing body must be responsible for services furnished in the hospital whether or not they are furnished under contracts. The governing body must ensure that a contractor of services (including one for shared services and joint ventures) furnishes services that permit the hospital to comply with all applicable conditions of participation and standards for the contracted services.

The governing body has the responsibility for assuring that hospital services are provided in compliance with the Medicare Conditions of participation and according to acceptable standards of practice, irrespective of whether the services are provided directly by hospital employees or indirectly by contract.

## THE CHALLENGES

Since 2006, laundry services continue to be the most outsourced hospital department contract<sup>ii</sup>. When it comes to a hospital's oversight of contracted laundry services, this can become a daunting task. The vast fragmentation of regulations, guidelines and practice standards makes it difficult. Compliance officers are addressing infection prevention, safety, and environment of care issues and frequently seek guidance through the Association for Linen Management (ALM).

Quality  
Quality



## THE SOLUTION

ALM's goals for addressing this challenge were to

- Assemble recognized practice standards in one place to reduce research time
- Avoid subrogating the hospital's authority recognizing they are ultimately responsible
- Encourage informed professionals to exercise their judgment in determining "quality services"
- Include state public health statutes for full disclosure
- Provide guidance/insight on laundry practice for assessment by non-laundry professionals

*"The section of the book on 'gauging compliance' is an essential tool for clinicians and non-laundry personnel unfamiliar with laundry operations."*

Terry Eads  
Director of Quality,  
Accreditation and Risk Management

**THE ASSOCIATION FOR LINEN MANAGEMENT** is a non-profit trade association providing education related to the textile care industry. The compendium of health care laundry standards, regulations and practice will serve hospital compliance officers and laundry management by assembling practice guidance into one place.

## Key References

- Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- American Institute of Architects Facility Guidelines Institute
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration

The consensus standards provide an excellent guide for developing policies and procedures. By providing the reference for each standard, management can easily access the details as needed.

It is ALM's aim that this publication will be used to facilitate communication between laundry management and their hospital partners. That together we will assure that quality laundry services are provided.

i The US Department of Health and Human Services. November 2010 <http://www.cms.gov/SurveyCertificationGenInfo/Downloads/AOContactInformation.pdf>

[The Joint Commission, Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program, and Det Norske Veritas (DNV)]

ii Beggs, Bruce "Survey: Laundry Remains Most-Outsourced Hospital Department." American Laundry News 14 Nov. 2008, A1+

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