

Laundry and Linen Services in Hospitals

Mrs. Krishna Veni, Laico

Laundry service is responsible for providing an adequate, clean and constant supply of linen to all users. The basic tasks include: sorting, washing, extracting, drying, ironing, folding, mending and delivery. A reliable laundry service is of utmost importance to the hospital. In today's medical care facilities, patients expect linen to be changed daily. An adequate supply of clean linen is sufficient for the comfort and safety of the patient thus becomes essential.

The term 'hospital linen' includes all textiles used in the hospital including mattress, pillow covers, blankets, bed sheets, towels, screens, curtains, doctors coats, theatre cloth and table cloths. Cotton is the most preferred and frequently used material. The hospital receives all these materials from different areas like Operation Theatre, wards, outpatient departments and office areas. The OT linen materials need special care since it has to be washed & sterilized carefully. So if possible, the hospital can go for separate laundry process for OT linen materials alone.

The hospital can either purchase washing machine or engage a washer man (dhobi) to manually wash the clothes

The main purpose of this department is to provide clean material to the patients and ensure that hygienic conditions are maintained in the process.

Most of the information given in the article are based on the practices being followed in the Aravind Eye Care System.

Responsibilities and Functions of laundry department

The responsibility of the department not only involves managing the technical operations but also making other decisions. This includes determination of the

type of linen to be purchased, the quantity necessary to be kept in stock, establishment of quotas for various places where they are used.

The functions of the laundry services

1. Collecting soiled linen from various places.
2. Sorting the linen and processing them
3. Inspecting and repairing or replacing damaged materials.
4. Distributing clean linen to the respective user departments.
6. Maintaining different types of registers.

Facilities and space requirements

The laundry should be located in an area that has ample daylight and natural ventilation. Ideally, it should be on the ground floor of an isolated building connected or adjacent to the water and power plant.

1. Space for heavy equipments like washing machine, squeezer etc.
2. Provision for supply of water and power.
3. Storage place for cleaning agents.
4. Space is also needed for sorting the soiled linen
5. Facilities to manually wash doctor's uniform and clean other soiled linen.
6. Clothes lined to dry in the sun.
7. Lines of cards to dry clothes in the sun.
8. Place for sewing, and mending area.
9. Place for ironing.
10. Desk to have registers and files.
11. Space in every ward for storing clean linen.

Control desk

The control desk is the nerve centre of the entire department and its efficiency determines the smooth operation and effectiveness of the department. It is the focal point for the dissemination of information and communication to various points in the department.

List of files and registers:

1. Linen stock register
2. Daily transaction register for wards
3. Daily transaction register for other areas
4. Dhobi pay register
5. Camp register

Duties and Responsibilities for the housekeeping incharge

1. All registers in the linen services to be maintained. Maintain a separate Indent for the cleaning agents used in laundry and the Indent should be signed by the housekeeping manager.
2. Daily use of cleaning agents are to be recorded and the records to be put up for housekeeping managers signature monthly.
3. Linen and curtains are to be checked for wear and tear quarterly.
4. Torn or faded linen is to be segregated and to be shown to the manager quarterly. If any item is found unserviceable the same should be written off the ledger after getting the approval of manager.
5. Torn or faded linen can be used for cleaning purposes.

6. purchase date of linen should be noted in the register to check the lifetime of the fabric.
7. Periodical maintenance of washing machine, Ironing machine, Iron box and Sewing machine to be carried out and the record to be maintained.
8. Washing charges for various linen are to be fixed. For any change in the charges, prior approval should be taken from the authority.
9. Tailoring rates for various items of stitched materials are to be maintained.
10. Plan and schedule of the standard procedure for cleaning all types of linen should be displayed in laundry room.
11. Time schedule to be prepared for collection of clean/soiled linen and to be followed strictly.
12. Ensure proper discipline among Housekeepers, Sweepers, Dhobi, and Tailor working in linen department.
13. Budget salary for dhobi can be based on the size and number of linen materials washed per day. The payment can be on daily basis and it can be calculated and given once in 15 days.
14. Training classes should be conducted for trainees when required.

Human resources requirement for inside laundry services

This can be applicable for 50 and above bedded hospitals.

S.No.	Human resources	Required no.	Assigned task	Report to
1.	Senior housekeeper	1	Controlling & Managing all activities in laundry	Housekeeping manager
2.	Dhobi (according to the mix of washing by hand and machine)	1	Sorting, Washing, drying folding and ironing of all linen materials.	Housekeeper incharge of laundry
3.	Sweeper (Part time)	1	Receiving & delivering the linen materials.	Housekeeper incharge of laundry
4.	Tailor (part time Optional)	1	Mending the damaged materials and stitching curtain pillow covers etc.	Housekeeper incharge of laundry

Note: If the hospital doesn't have the tailor they can approach outside tailoring unit.

If the hospital does not provide machineries then they have to recruit more than one dhobi.

General conditions for recruitment and selection of dhobi (for inside laundry services)

- A person from the neighbourhood aged between 20 and 40 is preferred.
- Clearly mention the working hour and insist functionality.
- Recommended by an employee working in the hospital.
- Should be physically clean and have pleasant manners.
- Should be interviewed and approved by manager. Collect information about their family members, address, marital status and previous experience in this job etc.
- Terms and conditions on Leave, salary and incentives should be made clear.
- Begin by having on Temporary basis.

Selection of equipment

The selection of equipment of a proper size is most important for economical production. The laundry equipment should be carefully selected. The following factors should be kept in mind :

- Reasonable capital cost
- Availability of spare parts and ease of maintenance
- Efficiency in working under normal conditions.
- Economy in consumption of utilities like water and power etc.
- Continuity of workflow and reduction of manual effort

List of equipments

The following is a list of commonly used equipment in a laundry.

- Washing machine (non automatic) Capacity
 - 30 bed sheets / load
 - 60 Pillow covers / load
- Water extractor Capacity:
 - 8 Bed sheets / load
 - 30 pillow covers / load
- Flat work iron (calendaring) Capacity:
 - 5 Bed sheets / load
 - 6 pillow covers

- Hand iron box
- Sewing machine

List of cleaning agents

- Clax Ster - 200gm/load
- Clax 100S - 40ml (For oil Stains)/load
- Clax Star - 220gm/load

Others

- A cart to receive and distribute linen
- A tub to soak the contaminated or heavily soiled linen
- Ironing table
- Iron buckets
- Cleaning brush
- Hangers
- Clips

Note: the hospital can go in for different types/ capacity of machines according to their needs and benefits.

Work schedule

To maintain and manage the laundry department effectively, the housekeeper should follow the planned work schedule

Daily work

- Clean all equipments in laundry
- Follow Daily Work procedure
- Check the equipment's working condition

Weekly work

- Indent the washing agents from the stores on every Saturday
- Wash doctors coat on every Sunday and replace

Monthly work

- Check linen stock in the wards
- Calculate Monthly expenses
- Check the contaminated and faded, damaged fabrics and enter in the register

Care of linen materials

1. Linen materials should be stored in dry places
2. Using large amount of washing soda and bleaching agent can damage the linen.
3. Rinse the fabrics properly to avoid deposition of detergents
4. The materials should be dried out properly

Stain removal procedure

Most stains can be removed if attended to immediately using correct methods. Some common stains and methods for their removal.

S.No	Stains	Method of removal
1.	Ball point	Rub lightly with cotton soaked in denatured spirit.
2	Blood	Soak in cold water for about an hour. Then transfer to lukewarm water containing an enzyme detergent. Soak for 30 minutes and launder or soak in cold water, to which common salt is added for about an hour and launder.
3.	Chewing gum	Remove surface gum with a blunt knife. Apply ice to the stain. Allow to soak in ice cold water for a few minutes. Launder
4.	Chocolate, coco	Same treatment as for blood.
5.	Coffee, tea	Apply borax solution and allow to dry. Launder
6.	Curry (Turmeric & oil)	Apply soap and bleach in sunlight. When dry, if stain has not disappeared, wet it and put it back in sunlight again.
7.	Fruit juice	White fabrics may be bleached with sodium hypochloride. Colored fabrics may be soaked in warm borax solution. Launder.
8.	Ice cream milk	Rinse through cold water and launder or apply petrol or carbon tetrachloride. Launder
9.	Ink	Hold under running water to remove much of the ink. Then treat with one of the following methods. Apply lime juice and salt and leave for 30 minutes and launder. Soak in sour milk or curds for 30 minutes and launder. Steep in dilute oxalic acid for 10 minutes then rinse thoroughly in dilute borax solution. Launder.
10.	Iodine	Fresh wet stain. Apply starch paste and leave it to absorb the stain. Launder.
11.	Mud	Allow the garment to dry and dust off as much of the mud as possible, then soak the stain in an alkaline bath (20 g / lit of sodium carbonate) for a couple of hours. Launder.
12.	Rust	A patented rust remover may be used or the stain may be soaked in cold 1% oxalic acid for about 15 minutes and then launder.
13.	Urine	Treat as perspiration or apply ethyl alcohol and allow to evaporate. Then apply chloroform and allow to evaporate. Launder.

Like in any other department the Laundry department if not managed efficiently can result in various problems. Proper maintenance of records is necessary so any missing linen is brought to the notice of the authority immediately. It is also important to keep a record of the cleaning materials used and also to keep track of the expenses incurred. This would involve the salaries paid and the maintenance charges etc.

- otherwise it generate terrible odour and also the lifetime of the materials will be shortened.
5. Should not use bleaching powder directly on the fabric.
 6. Remove deposited stains immediately from the fabric.
 7. Should not mix infected linen with others.
 8. Should not overload washing or squeezing machines.

Tips

For laundry management

- Use water and cleaning agents economically

- Stock the linen materials in 1:3 ratios
 - 1 set of linen -Patient room
 - 1 set - Duty room cupboard
 - 1set - In laundry
- Use all faded and damaged fabrics for dusting and cleaning windows, furniture etc.

Conclusion

Thus, laundry and linen service plays a very important role in maintaining a safeguarding the health and hygiene of both the inpatient and medical staff. The quality and standard of this service determines in a large measure, the quality of any health care system.

THE MISSION OF VISION 2020

The mission of VISION – 2020 is to eliminate the main causes of blindness in order to give all people in the world, particularly the millions of needlessly blind, the right to sight.

The Right To Sight is designed to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020. The program will enable all parties and individuals involved in combating blindness to work in a focused and coordinated way to achieve the common goal of eliminating preventable and treatable blindness. Vision 2020, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO), is a global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, which will take on the following responsibilities:

- Increase awareness of blindness as a major public health issue
- Control the major causes of blindness
- Train ophthalmologists and other personnel to provide eye care
- Create an infrastructure to manage the problem
- Develop appropriate technology

Vision 2020 involves the active participation of UN agencies, governments, eye care organizations, health professionals, philanthropic institutions and individuals working together in a global partnership to accomplish this goal by the year 2020.