



HCAHPS Improvement Brief: Cleanliness

Looking to improve patients' perceptions of cleanliness? Emphasize Relationships!

Relationship-based cleaning is an approach to housekeeping and maintenance that abandons traditional notions that these essential tasks should be completed discreetly so as not to draw attention to any areas in need of attention or repair. Rather than cleaning in an intentionally inconspicuous way, in a relationship-based cleaning approach, housekeeping staff goes out of their way to introduce themselves, to communicate to patients what they are doing and to inquire if there are any specific cleaning needs to be handled.

Below is a summary of 5 key elements of a relationship-based cleaning approach:

KNOCK

Housekeeping personnel always knock on the patient room door, introduce themselves and request permission to clean the room at that time.

ENGAGE

Once in the room, housekeeping personnel ask the patient (and family if present) if they have any specific housekeeping needs or concerns. *If those needs are not able to be addressed at that time, expectations are established with the patient for when the issue will be addressed.*

CONNECT

During routine housekeeping tasks, personnel seek out opportunities to personally connect with the patient. For instance, commenting on a photo or card on display, asking about the origin of the patient's name or simply smiling warmly and making appropriate eye contact.

CONCLUDE

The housekeeping interaction is concluded with the personnel inquiring of the patient if the cleaning is satisfactory to them, and leaving a card with their name and contact information for how they can be reached should a cleaning need arise.

REASSURE

If housekeeping personnel does not have the opportunity to interact with the patient (for instance, if the patient is sleeping or in a procedure), the card is left to reassure the patient and family that the room has been cleaned.



Additional Improvement Strategies



- **Invite patient and family partners to complete a series of cleanliness walkabouts.** Individuals who spend most days (or nights) in a space are susceptible to “home blindness.” This is a state wherein you become so accustomed to certain flaws and failings that you no longer even register them. To overcome this, it is important to invite individuals who will view the environment through fresh eyes. This is an excellent opportunity to engage patient and family partners on environmental walk-throughs so that they can identify specific cleanliness issues that concern them.
- **Rotate the order of room cleaning.** For example, the first room cleaned today is not first room cleaned tomorrow. This ensures that different rooms benefit from being cleaned when staff is “freshest.”
- **Introduce behavioral expectations for all staff** to establish that maintaining a clean environment of care is everyone’s responsibility. Specific expectations could include that all staff will pick up litter and notify the appropriate department in the case of a more significant clean-up need. Providing departments with mini vacuums and other tools they may need to address immediate cleaning needs will further reinforce this expectation that maintaining a clean environment is an all hands on deck endeavor.