



Policy

Laundry Standards

PURPOSE

The Non-Hospital Medical and Surgical Facilities Accreditation Program (NHMSFAP) Committee is responsible for establishing accreditation standards, policies, rules, procedures and guidelines for the NHMSFAP to ensure the delivery of high-quality and safe services in non-hospital facilities.

This policy addresses the laundering of reusable textiles used in non-hospital facilities.

BACKGROUND

The textiles which are laundered varies from health-care facility to health-care facility. In non-hospital facilities, reusable health-care textiles may include patient bedding and gowns, towels, scrubs, surgical gowns and drapes, privacy curtains and environmental cleaning cloths and mop heads.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC) *Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities* outline the necessary parameters for effective cleaning and disinfection of reusable health-care textiles such as:

- Laundering cycles which consist of an initial flush, main wash, bleaching, rinsing and souring, followed by drying, pressing as needed, folding and appropriate storage
- Achieving minimum temperatures and cycle times such as a washing temperature of at least 71°C for a minimum of 25 minutes
- Achieving minimum disinfection concentrations such as a total chlorine residual of 50-150 ppm in the bleach cycle
- Adding a mild acid to the final rinse (souring) cycle which rapidly shifts the pH to inactivate micro-organisms and remove residual alkali which reduces the risk of skin irritation among patients
- Laundering areas which physically separate the dirty area for receiving and handling used textiles from the clean area, provide one-way workflow and meet ventilation parameters

POLICY

The NHMSFAP Committee recognizes that high standards for infection, prevention and control are essential to providing safe procedural and surgical services in non-hospital facilities and that laundry practices are part of establishing a clean and safe patient-care environment. Therefore, the NHMSFAP Committee has directed that **all reusable textiles** used in a non-hospital facility **be laundered by a provider accredited by a health-care laundry accreditation body**.

Accreditation by a health-care laundry accreditation body will provide assurance that recognized standards for the effective laundering of health-care textiles are being achieved and maintained.

Non-hospital facilities which outsource the laundering of all their reusable textiles to a third-party provider will need to ensure that their provider is accredited by a health-care laundry accreditation body and if not accredited, they will need to either switch to an accredited provider or ensure their current provider achieves and maintains accreditation by a health-care laundry accreditation body.

Non-hospital facilities which perform some or all laundry in-house are encouraged to outsource the laundering of all reusable textiles to a third-party provider accredited by a health-care laundry accreditation body. Non-hospital facilities which choose to continue performing some or all laundry in-house, even if only laundering environmental cleaning textiles, will need to achieve and maintain accreditation by a health-care laundry accreditation body.

Some health-care laundry accreditation programs have two levels of accreditation. The first level typically covers the foundational components for the effective cleaning and disinfection of reusable health-care textiles such as the laundry facilities and equipment, the laundry processing cycle, surgical textiles as appropriate, laundry personnel education and training and laundry transport and storage. The second level typically covers the microbial testing of laundered products to validate that the laundry provider's practices deliver hygienically clean textiles. While many third-party laundry providers have achieved and maintain a hygienically clean level of accreditation or certification, **this second level of accreditation or certification is optional at this time.**

This requirement is effective **March 1, 2025.**

RESPONSIBILITY

Role	Responsibility
Medical director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring conformance with the accreditation standards, policies, rules, procedures and guidelines for the NHMSFAP, and the Bylaws Ensuring their laundry provider (third-party or non-hospital facility) is accredited by a health-care laundry accreditation body
NHMSFAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documentation to verify that all reusable textiles used in a non-hospital facility are laundered by a provider accredited by a health-care laundry accreditation body
NHMSFAP Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing accreditation standards, policies, rules, procedures and guidelines for the NHMSFAP Administering the NHMSFAP and ensuring facility compliance with the accreditation standards, policies, rules, procedures and guidelines, and with the Bylaws

DEFINITIONS

Reusable textiles Includes but is not limited to bedding, towels, patient gowns, scrubs, surgical drapes and gowns, privacy curtains and environmental cleaning cloths and mop heads

REFERENCES

Environmental infection control guidelines [Internet]. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; c2003. Background – G. laundry and bedding; 2003 [updated 2019 Jul; cited 2023 Jan 11].

Decker, BK. The role of health care laundry in infection prevention. Infect Today [Internet]. 2022 Jul 21 [cited 2023 Jan 11];26(6).

Sehulster, LM. Healthcare laundry and textiles in the United States: review and commentary on contemporary infection prevention issues. Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol [Internet]. 2015 [cited 2023 Jan 11];36(9):1073-1088.

Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council [Internet]. Rapid City (SD): Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council; c2022 [cited 2023 Jan 11].

Hygienically Clean Healthcare [Internet]. Alexandria (VA): Hygienically Clean Healthcare; c2019. Certifications; 2019 [cited 2023 Jan 11].