Infection Control in Healthcare Facilities: The Complete Professional Guide (2026)

THE DIRECT ANSWER

A healthcare facility infection control program is a hospital-wide system—required under CMS Conditions of Participation and overseen by a qualified infection prevention leader—that combines clinical precautions, environmental hygiene, water and ventilation controls, and construction barriers to stop pathogen spread. Facility managers own the physical environment pieces: HVAC performance, ICRA barriers, water management, and survey-ready documentation that ties the building to NHSN surveillance and CDC HICPAC guidance.

WHAT AN INFECTION CONTROL PROGRAM IS—AND WHO OWNS WHAT

- CMS expects hospitals to maintain an organized infection control program under 42 CFR 482.42 ; skilled nursing facilities follow parallel requirements at 42 CFR 483.80 . The program is not an EVS checklist or a single committee.

STANDARD PRECAUTIONS VS TRANSMISSION-BASED PRECAUTIONS

- CDC infection control guidance for healthcare personnel rests on two layers. Standard precautions treat all blood, body fluids, non-intact skin, and mucous membranes as potentially infectious: hand hygiene, PPE when exposure is anticipated, safe injection practices, and appropriate reprocessing of instruments.

FIELD QUESTION

Who is legally responsible for the infection control program in a hospital?

CMS places ultimate responsibility on the hospital’s governing body and administration to implement the program described at 42 CFR 482.42, with day-to-day leadership typically assigned to a qualified infection prevention professional. Facility managers are accountable for environmental and engineering controls that the program depends on.

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Caution: codes, editions, and targets vary by facility and authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). Figures marked as common practice are facility targets, not code requirements. Confirm against your AHJ and the current code text before acting.