

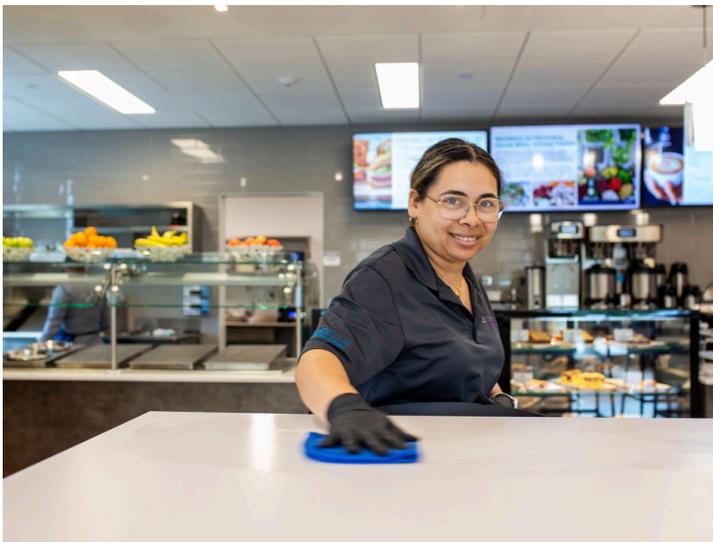
# Environmental Cleaning as a Health, Performance, and Recovery Strategy



## Executive Summary

For leaders in behavioral health facilities, the physical environment is not a backdrop to care, it is an active contributor to outcomes. Environmental cleaning directly influences safety, emotional regulation, infection risk, staff performance, and trust.

This case study examines the benefits of professional, well-designed environmental cleaning programs across four settings, workplace environments, senior living, healthcare, and private schools, and translates those insights into clear implications for behavioral health leadership. Drawing on published research and industry data, the evidence shows that cleanliness is not just a compliance requirement. It is a measurable driver of productivity, health, recovery, and return on investment.



## Environmental Cleaning and Employee Productivity

Clean, orderly environments support focus, reduce stress, and improve cognitive performance. Studies in workplace psychology and facilities management show that cluttered or poorly maintained environments increase cognitive load, distract attention, and elevate stress hormones.

Research published in the Harvard Business Review highlights that employees working in clean, well-maintained environments report higher job satisfaction and are better able to concentrate on complex tasks. Additional studies link improved indoor environmental quality, including cleanliness, to measurable gains in productivity and reduced absenteeism.

From an ROI perspective, even modest productivity improvements deliver outsized returns. A one to two percent increase in employee productivity often outweighs the total annual cost of professional environmental services. For organizations operating around the clock, such as behavioral health facilities, these gains compound across shifts.

## Senior Living: Health Benefits of Clean, Well-Maintained Environments

In senior living communities, environmental cleanliness is directly tied to resident health, safety, and quality of life. Older adults are more vulnerable to infections, respiratory issues, and injury related to environmental hazards.

Studies published in journals such as *Age and Ageing* and *The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* demonstrate that clean, well-maintained environments are associated with lower infection rates, reduced fall risk, and improved resident confidence and mobility.

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Families consistently cite cleanliness as a key indicator of care quality. Communities that invest in visible, consistent environmental services benefit from stronger family trust, higher satisfaction scores, and longer lengths of stay. These factors translate into stabilized occupancy and reduced reputational risk.

## Healthcare: Clean Facilities and Patient Recovery

In healthcare settings, the relationship between environmental cleaning and patient outcomes is well established. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization identify environmental hygiene as a critical component of infection prevention and control.

Peer-reviewed studies show that thorough cleaning and disinfection of patient care environments significantly reduce healthcare-associated infections. Lower infection rates are linked to shorter lengths of stay, fewer readmissions, and improved recovery outcomes.

From a financial standpoint, preventing even a small number of infections generates substantial savings. Healthcare-associated infections can cost tens of thousands of dollars per case. Investments in enhanced cleaning protocols consistently deliver positive ROI by reducing treatment costs, liability exposure, and operational disruptions.

For behavioral health facilities, where patients may have compromised immune systems or co-occurring medical conditions, environmental hygiene is foundational to safe, effective care.

## Private Schools: Cleanliness and Student Health and Performance

Research in educational and public health settings demonstrates that clean school environments support student health, attendance, and academic performance. Poor cleaning practices contribute to the spread of respiratory illnesses, gastrointestinal infections, and allergens, all of which increase absenteeism.

Studies from organizations such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the CDC show that improved cleaning protocols in schools reduce illness-related absences and support better concentration and classroom behavior.

The ROI is clear. Fewer sick days mean more instructional time, better academic outcomes, and reduced strain on families and staff. These findings are particularly relevant for behavioral health programs that include educational components or serve adolescent populations.



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## Implications for Behavioral Health Facility Leaders

Behavioral health environments share characteristics with all four settings examined, continuous occupancy, vulnerable populations, high emotional sensitivity, and the need for trust and stability.

Clean, well-maintained facilities support behavioral health outcomes by:

- Reducing environmental stressors that contribute to agitation and anxiety
- Supporting infection prevention and physical safety
- Reinforcing dignity, respect, and trauma-informed care principles
- Improving staff focus, morale, and retention

Environmental services teams trained in healthcare and behavioral health standards are better equipped to deliver consistent results without disrupting care routines.

## Return on Investment Summary

Across sectors, the ROI of environmental cleaning is driven by several consistent factors:

- Reduced absenteeism and staff turnover
- Lower infection rates and associated treatment costs
- Improved productivity and operational efficiency
- Stronger reputation, trust, and stakeholder confidence

For behavioral health facilities, the return extends beyond financial metrics. A clean environment supports calmer milieus, safer care delivery, and better alignment with clinical goals.

## What Does It All Mean?

Environmental cleaning is not an overhead expense. It is an investment in health, performance, and recovery.

Behavioral health leaders who prioritize professional, intentional environmental services create environments that support healing, protect staff, and reduce operational risk. Clean spaces reinforce stability and trust, two essential elements in effective behavioral healthcare.

When environmental services are aligned with clinical priorities, the physical environment becomes an active partner in care.



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