



## **Considerations for Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order Guidelines**

### **Introduction**

These guidelines are intended to assist organizations in developing Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) policies. DNR policies allowing patients to refuse unwanted resuscitation attempts and ensure that patient rights are honored and are part of emergency response protocols.

It is strongly recommended that organizations approach the development and implementation of these guidelines on a local basis; involving professionals, volunteers and members from their communities. Special consideration must be made for State laws, the community EMS practices and the personal sensitivity of this issue.

### **Background**

The goals of response in emergency medical situations include saving lives, preventing disability and relieving suffering. Historically, organizations along with the EMS systems focused on sudden cardiac death and resuscitation. Patients were treated to the fullest extent possible, and discussions about patients' wishes regarding resuscitation or the extent of treatment were reserved for medical personnel in acute care facilities.

More and more frequently, however, members or families of members resist resuscitative measures. They view resuscitation attempts in selected situations as lacking sufficient benefit and merely prolonging the process of dying, while causing unnecessary discomfort and emotional distress. Organizations are now regularly approached to honor DNR orders.

Many states now have "out-of-hospital" DNR programs that make an individual's wishes known to emergency responders and others outside the hospital setting. These programs are primarily designed to help people in the final stages of a terminal illness or who are suffering from another serious condition and are certain they do not want to receive emergency treatment.

### **Developing your Policy**

Organizations should approach the development and implementation of these guidelines on a local basis; involving professionals, volunteers and members from their communities. If your organization has a Medical Advisory Committee they should review the information in this document and prepare a policy for Board approval. The committee should consider the member demographics, state law, local EMS policy and staff training.

If your organization does not have an existing Medical Advisory Committee possible sources of helpful information include: local hospice or similar organizations, State or local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) offices and other professionals such as nurses, social workers, counselors, and chaplains.

## **Out-of-Hospital DNR Programs**

Paramedics and other emergency or first responders working outside the hospital generally have a duty to provide CPR and other forms of resuscitation when needed. But some people may not want to be revived. Most states now have DNR programs so that a doctor's DNR order can be honored outside of the hospital setting. These programs are usually administered by the state's Emergency Medical Service (EMS) department or state medical associations.

The programs vary from state to state, but some common features are:

1. Standardized documents that responders can recognize quickly
2. DNR bracelets or medallions that communicate to the responder DNR status
3. Physician involvement. A doctor generally must sign DNR orders before responders honor them.
4. Comfort treatment is not withheld. Responders are still required to alleviate pain and discomfort even under orders not to resuscitate.
5. Physicians who are unwilling (for personal, moral, or professional reasons) to issue DNR orders may be required to transfer the care of a patient to another physician who will.

### **DNR Identification**

In conjunction with the issuance of DNR Orders, many states have authorized an approved bracelet or necklace as an alternate form of DNR Order Identification.

### **DNR Form**

States usually require that a unique document available to doctors as the only recognized form for use as a DNR. Local EMS or State Health Departments will have this information available.

### **Practical Tips**

1. Train your staff on your DNR policy, including member service staff in handling requests and responders for recognizing a request
2. Include DNR request in your written emergency procedure plan
3. Develop a written statement to publish as part of your member ship policy
4. Consider recognizing only those requests where the member will wear a bracelet or medallion (as allowed by law)
5. DNR orders can only be confirmed by the appropriate documentation (form), accepted bracelet/medallion, or other individuals as outlined in your state's law
6. All emergency situations and procedures performed should be documented. In a situation where a DNR is considered your report should list what from the DNR request was made (written, bracelet/medallion, person).
7. Follow the chain of command as outlines in your written Emergency Procedures

## Sample Protocol for First Responders

1. Perform routine victim assessment
2. Look for DNR bracelet/medallion
3. Contact EMS and follow written emergency protocols
4. Proceed with appropriate response based on your training and availability of information

## How to honor a DNR Order until EMS arrives

These comforting interventions are encouraged (*as your training allows*):

- § Airway management
- § Suction
- § Supplemental oxygen delivery devices
- § Bleeding control
- § Patient positioning

These resuscitative measures should be avoided:

- § Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- § Intubation or other advanced airway management
- § Artificial ventilation
- § Defibrillation

## Resources

- Local hospice or similar organization
- State or local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) offices
- Other local professionals (such as nurses, social workers, counselors, and chaplains)
- National Association of State EMS Directors - <http://www.nasemsd.org/index.shtml>
- American Heart Association - [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

## States with DNR programs

The following is a partial listing of states that recognize out-of-hospital DNR orders. States use a variety of phrases to describe the order, form, or document. Organizations should become familiar with the laws in regard to DNR orders in their state.

<b>State</b>	<b>Documents</b>
Alabama	Prehospital Do Not Resuscitate Order
Alaska	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Arizona	Prehospital Medical Care Directive
Arkansas	Do Not Resuscitate Order
California	Prehospital DNR Request Form or prehospital DNR Form
Colorado	Cardiopulmonary (CPR) Directive
Connecticut	Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order
Florida	Prehospital Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNRO)
Georgia	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Hawaii	Comfort Care Only Document
Idaho	Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order or Identification
Illinois	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Indiana	Do Not Resuscitate Declaration and Order
Kansas	Do Not Resuscitate Order or Directive
Kentucky	Standard Form or Identification Wish Not To Be Resuscitated
Louisiana	Do-Not-Resuscitate Identification Bracelet
Maine	EMS Comfort Care / DNR Program or DNR Order
Maryland	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Massachusetts	Comfort Care / Do Not Resuscitate Order ("DNR") Order Verification
Michigan	Do Not Resuscitate Order or Identification Bracelet
Missouri	Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Request
Montana	Do Not Resuscitate Order or Identification
Nevada	Do-Not-Resuscitate Identification or Order
New Hampshire	Do Not Resuscitate Order
New Mexico	EMS Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Order or EMS DNR Order
New York	Nonhospital Order Not to Resuscitate (DNR Order)
Ohio	Do-Not-Resuscitate Order or DNR Identification
Oklahoma	Do-Not-Resuscitate Identification or Consent Form
Oregon	POLST or Physician Order for Life Sustaining Treatment
Rhode Island	"Comfort One" or DNR Bracelet
South Carolina	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Tennessee	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Texas	Out-of-Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order
Utah	EMS/DNR Form, Directive, or Declaration
Virginia	EMS Do Not Resuscitate Order
Washington	EMS - No CPR Form (Directive)
West Virginia	Do Not Resuscitate Order
Wisconsin	Do Not Resuscitate Order or Bracelet
Wyoming	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Directive or "Comfort One"