

DO NOT RESUSCITATE (DNR)

PURPOSE:

River Falls EMS recommends that the decision to withhold cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) rest with the patient and his/her physician and that our prehospital personnel honor directives limiting CPR in individuals who have refused this treatment. This guideline is intended to delineate the appropriate response by emergency medical personnel to a valid Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order in the event of a request for emergency medical assistance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

It is customary medical practice that CPR is performed on all persons found to be in cardiac arrest, in the absence of directives from a primary physician to withhold such action. There are individuals who would decline these therapies or for whom the treatments are without benefit. Such persons may legally and ethically decline these treatments. 1995 Wisconsin Act 200 created new language in Chapter 154 of the statutes establishing a system for issuance of DNR orders and DNR bracelets in certain circumstances. The DNR order is a written order by physicians under Chapter 154 of the Wisconsin Statutes to direct emergency medical technicians, first responders, and emergency health care facilities personnel not to attempt CPR on a person for whom the order is issued if that person suffers cardiac or respiratory arrest. Specifications for DNR bracelets and the procedures for these emergency health care providers to use in following a DNR order are described in Administrative Code HFS 125.

DNR ORDERS CONTROLLED BY ACT 200:

Act 200 only applies to the entities above that are primarily prehospital and emergency department health care providers. Act 200 does not control DNR orders for inpatient hospital settings or other inpatient settings.

PATIENT ELIGIBILITY UNDER ACT 200:

A person must be a “qualified patient” to be eligible for a DNR order. A qualified patient is someone age 18 or older who:

1. Has a terminal condition, or
2. Has a medical condition such that, were the patient to suffer cardiac or pulmonary failure, resuscitation would be unsuccessful or would be temporary, or
3. Has a medical condition such that, were the patient to suffer cardiac or pulmonary failure, resuscitation would cause significant harm or pain.

CONDITIONS FOR A LEGAL DNR ORDER UNDER ACT 200:

Only an attending physician may issue a DNR order under Act 200. The attending physician may issue a DNR order for a patient only if ALL of the following apply:

1. The patient is a qualified patient.
2. The patient requests the DNR order.
3. The order is in writing.
4. The patient signs the order.
5. The physician does not know the patient to be pregnant.

DNR BRACELET:

The physician or designee attaches a standardized metal or plastic DNR bracelet after all prerequisites have been met. Hospitals, clinics, etc. can supply the bracelet. The plastic bracelet must:

1. Be clear and made of plastic that is at least $\frac{3}{4}$ ” wide
2. Have an insert distributed by the DHFS that has a preprinted logo of the State of Wisconsin
3. Have the words “Do Not Resuscitate” in blue over the seal of the State of WI.

4. Have the required information printed in size 8 font or greater
5. Have on the left half of the insert: patient name, address, date of birth, and gender
6. Have on the right half of the insert: physician's name, business telephone number, and signature

The metal MedicAlert bracelet is also approved as a valid DNR. The metal bracelet must:

1. Be inscribed with "WI Do Not Resuscitate EMS" on the back side of the bracelet.

PROCEDURE FOR CARING FOR PATIENTS WITH A VALID DNR BRACELET:

1. Assess the patient's airway, breathing and circulation.
2. If pulseless and nonbreathing, check the patient's wrist for a state-approved DNR bracelet.
3. If no bracelet is found on the wrist, provide usual care.
4. If a nonfaced bracelet is found on the patient's wrist, do not initiate life support measures. Emergency health care personnel only honor DNR orders when they see a valid DNR bracelet.
5. Health care will be provided to DNR patients with only full resuscitative care being withheld. Comfort care (such as suction, oxygen, and oral/nasal airways) should be given, but no life sustaining cardiac or pulmonary care (such as advanced airways [Combitube or endotracheal tube], bag-valve-mask, demand valve resuscitation, defibrillation or chest compressions) will be provided.

CONDITIONS THAT INVALIDATE A DNR ORDER:

1. The patient has revoked the DNR order or expressed to the emergency health care provider the desire to be resuscitated. The emergency health care provider should then promptly remove the bracelet.
2. The DNR appears to have been tampered with.
3. The emergency health care provider knows that the patient is pregnant.
4. The patient destroys the bracelet.
5. The patient removes or asks someone to remove the bracelet.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING THE CARRYING OUT THE DNR ORDER:

1. In the event a patient changes his/her mind regarding the DNR order prior to cardiac arrest, family members request resuscitation or disagreement occurs at the time of cardiac arrest, resuscitative measures should be initiated by prehospital personnel and treatment decisions should be made by the physician responsible for care.
2. Valid written DNR orders that are current and signed by the physician, patient, and appropriate witness may be honored in the absence of a DNR bracelet, but they must be physically available and readable to the emergency health care provider.
3. Contact medical control if there is any doubt about honoring the order.

IMMUNITIES PROVIDED UNDER THE LAW:

No physician, emergency medical technician, first responder, health care professional or emergency health care facility may be held criminally liable, or charged with unprofessional conduct, for any of the following:

1. Under the directive of a DNR order, withholding or withdrawing resuscitation from a patient;
2. Failing to act upon the revocation of a DNR order unless they had actual knowledge of the revocation;
3. Failing to comply with a DNR order if they did not have actual knowledge of the DNR order or if the person, in good faith, believed the order had been revoked.

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