



SENSITIVE ISSUES: CLIENTS' ADVANCE DIRECTIVES and "DO NOT RESUSCITATE"

In working with elderly and disabled clients and their families, we sometimes discuss advance directives, as well as explaining the meaning of Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders. The US National Library of Medicine (NIH) defines a DNR order as one specific type of advance directive, and states "CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) is not to be performed if your breathing stops or your heart stops beating. The order may be written by the person's doctor after discussing the issue with the person (if possible), the proxy [health care agent or guardian], or family." (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus>)

Emergency care "first responders" in Wisconsin are required to attempt CPR except when there is a valid DNR order identified by a DNR bracelet (worn on the wrist and previously obtained through his or her physician) when they arrive. In providing such a bracelet the physician is required to counsel the patient, legal guardian or health care agent (in the case of an incapacitated patient), provide written information about DNR procedures, and document in the patient's file the qualifying medical condition that warrants the DNR order.

In Wisconsin, these orders are "intended to streamline the care of any patient who has a **known terminal condition** to ensure that medical care provided in the out-of-hospital

setting is consistent with the patient's desire and the attending physician's authorization." (<http://dhs.wi.gov/ems/EMSsection/DNR.htm> (emphasis in original).

Revoking a DNR

As with any advance directive, the DNR order can be revoked. For example, a guardian or the health care agent can ask the emergency responder to attempt resuscitation, or the bracelet can be removed before there is a need to call emergency personnel. Of course, this should only be done by the patient, guardian or health care agent. If this happens, the physician who signed the order should be notified as soon as possible. See the State of Wisconsin website [Medic Alert Sponsorship Program](#) (PDF, 14 KB) for further information.

Topics to Discuss with Your Health Care Agent

We have developed a document, "Topics to Discuss with Your Health Care Agent," which reviews these and related issues. If you would like a copy sent to you by mail or email, please call **Jill Hyatt** at **414 963-2600**.

A Care Manager Can Help

If you, a family member, a client or a friend is interested in additional information about DNR orders or advance directives **Jill** can also schedule an appointment with one of our professional Care Managers to further discuss these issues.

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