



San Benito County Emergency Medical Services Agency

GUIDELINES FOR EMS PERSONNEL REGARDING DO NOT RESUSCITATE (DNR) ORDERS/DIRECTIVES

Policy : 1190
Effective : May 1, 2010
Reviewed : May 1, 2010

I. Authority and References:

- A. California EMS Authority Publication #111, Guidelines for EMS Personnel Regarding Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Directives, March 1993, second edition.
- B. California Probate Code § 4600 and following on Advanced Directives.
- C. California Probate Code Section 4780 – 4785

II. Purpose:

To establish criteria for EMS field personnel in San Benito County to withhold resuscitative measures.

This policy applies to both adult and pediatric patients.

III. Definitions:

- A. Do not resuscitate (DNR) means that no resuscitative measures are performed on a patient. Resuscitative measures include: (i) chest compressions, (ii) defibrillation, (iii) assisted ventilation, (iv) endotracheal intubation, and (v) cardiotoxic drugs. Patients shall receive palliative treatment other than resuscitative measures (e.g., for airway obstruction, pain, dyspnea, major hemorrhage, etc.), as appropriate and in accordance with San Benito County EMS Agency BLS and ALS treatment protocols and policies.
- B. Absent Vital Signs: Absence of respirations and absence of carotid pulse.
- C. Emergency Medical Services Prehospital Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Form: Form approved by the California Medical Services Authority (EMSA) and the California Medical Association (CMA) that permits patients to request that EMS Personnel not perform resuscitative measures on them. (See Section V.)

- D. Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST): This form stipulates levels of care to be delivered to the patient, signed by the patient/patient's representative and the patient's physician. It stipulates whether or not resuscitation should be performed in the event of cardiac arrest, and if the patient is alive, the level of care to be provided. For the purposes of Prehospital medical care provision, only Section A and B need to be evaluated.
- E. DNR Medallion: Medal or permanently imprinted insignia, worn by a patient, that has been manufactured and distributed in accordance with EMSA and CMA DNR requirements and is imprinted with the words "Do Not Resuscitate, EMS." (See Section V.)

IV. Other Advance Health Care Directives

- A. One legal instrument that may be encountered is the California Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPAHC) found in Civil Code Sections 2430-2445. This document allows individuals to appoint an "attorney-in-fact" to make health care decisions for them if they become incapacitated. (Note that the attorney-in-fact is prohibited from consenting to certain treatments, including placement in a mental health facility, convulsive therapy, psychosurgery, sterilization and abortion.) The document also allows written specification of what types of treatment or the intensity of care (including a DNR order) an individual would desire if they were unable to make decisions for themselves. Decisions by the attorney-in-fact must be within the limits set by the individual, if any, when they complete the DPAHC.

The DPAHC is four (4) pages long, although not all sections must be completed. Health care providers, including emergency responders, respecting the decisions of the attorney-in-fact or written instructions in the DPAHC are provided immunity from criminal prosecution, civil liability, or professional disciplinary action.

Providers may be directed to respect the decisions made by an attorney-in-fact at the scene of an emergency when the patient is unable to make decisions for her/himself. Providers may respect directions they find written in the DPAHC regarding withholding or providing resuscitation. Written information in the DPAHC gives health care providers direction as to the patient's wishes and may be valuable in assessing whether to proceed with resuscitation.

- B. "Living Wills: There are a variety of "living wills" available from many sources. While these may communicate to the provider some sense of the patient's wishes regarding resuscitation, the wide variety of these documents and the inability to confirm the legitimacy of the orders makes them unsuitable for emergency use without prior confirmation. A base hospital may, however, elect to use these in guiding a patient's therapy. When in doubt, the provider should contact the Base Hospital.

- C. “Declaration”: Another document is the “Declaration” found in the California Natural Death Act in Health and Safety Code Sections 7185-7194.5. This instrument is a declaration to physicians by adult patients directing the withholding or withdrawal of life sustaining procedures in a terminal condition or permanent unconscious state. The directive only applies to incurable and irreversible conditions that “without the administration of life-sustaining treatment, will within reasonable medical judgment, result in death within a relatively short time.” Two physicians must examine the patient and certify his/her condition in writing, the patient cannot be pregnant at the time, and the instrument must be witnessed by two individuals who are subject to certain limitation. Life-sustaining treatment includes any medical procedure or intervention, including hydration and nutrition that serves only to prolong the process of dying or an irreversible coma or persistent vegetative state. The Declaration should be viewed largely as a directive to the physician and other health care providers regarding the patient’s wishes; however, it is not as suitable for use in Prehospital care as standardized DNR directives, or even the DPAHC.

V. Attachments

Attachment A: California Emergency Medical Services Authority/California Medical Association statewide Prehospital DNR Form. NOTE: SAMPLE ONLY. THIS IS NOT A VALID FORM.

Attachment B: California Emergency Medical Services Authority/California Medical Association statewide Prehospital DNR Form – Spanish instructions version. NOTE: SAMPLE ONLY, THIS IS NOT A VALID FORM.

Attachment C: List of DNR medallion manufacturers approved by the California EMS Authority.

Attachment D: California Medical Association form; Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care Decisions, 1996.