

Advance Health Care Directives

503.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy identifies the circumstances and types of documents required for District Emergency Medical Services (EMS) members to withhold or withdraw resuscitative or life-sustaining measures based on the Health Care Decisions Law (Probate Code § 4600 et seq.).

Nothing in this policy should be interpreted to limit EMS members from relieving an airway obstruction.

503.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Advance health care directive (or Advance Directive) - A document executed pursuant to the Health Care Decisions Law, used to give health care instructions, including directions to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining measures and CPR (Probate Code § 4605). A valid Advance Directive must contain the date of its execution, signature of the patient or of another adult in the patient's name, and be acknowledged by a notary or signed by at least two adult witnesses to the signing (Probate Code § 4674).

Attorney-in-fact - A person granted legal authority in a written document to act for another in health matters (Probate Code § 4670).

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) request - A document that directs a health care provider not to make resuscitative efforts, such as chest compressions, defibrillation, assisted ventilation, basic airway adjuncts, advance airway adjuncts (e.g., endotracheal tube, Combitube®), cardiotoxic medications or other medications or means intended to initiate a heartbeat or to treat a non-perfusing rhythm. A DNR request includes:

- An Advance Directive that directs the withholding of life sustaining or resuscitating measures.
- A pre-hospital DNR request approved by the EMS authority or the California Medical Association, or an equivalent document from another jurisdiction.
- An order written by a physician or a patient in hospice care, a skilled nursing facility or other licensed care facility.
- Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) Form

A DNR request can also be evidenced by a DNR medallion.

DNR medallion - A medic alert medallion/bracelet engraved with the words "Do Not Resuscitate," the letters "DNR" or "DNR-EMS," a patient identification number and a 24-hour toll-free telephone number (Probate Code § 4780).

Health care agent - A person designated in a written power of attorney for health care to make health care decisions (Probate Code § 4670).

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Palliative care - The total care of patients who are not responsive to curative treatment, designed to achieve the highest quality of life possible.

Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) Form - A form available statewide that allows an individual to express his/her desires concerning resuscitation and various resuscitation modalities (Probate Code § 4780).

503.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Fresno County Fire Protection District that EMS members honor DNR requests to withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures.

503.3 PROCEDURES

The following guidelines should be used by members who are presented with a DNR request:

- (a) EMS members shall honor a DNR request when it can be reasonably established that the patient is the subject of the DNR request and:
 1. EMS members have identified a DNR request, DNR medallion or POLST form as defined in this policy, or
 2. EMS members have personally seen the DNR request in the patient's medical record in a health care facility and they reasonably believe it has not been revoked.
- (b) DNR patients should receive non-resuscitation-related palliative care and other comfort measures, as would any other person.
- (c) A DNR request shall be disregarded if the patient requests resuscitative measures.
- (d) EMS members may accept a verbal request to withhold or withdraw resuscitative measures under the following circumstances:
 1. A licensed physician identified as the patient's physician and present with the patient gives a verbal order and writes the DNR order on the Pre-hospital Care Report (PCR) and signs it. The physician's name, address, telephone number and medical license number must be recorded on the PCR.
 2. A DNR request is communicated by an attorney-in-fact or a health care agent and the attorney-in-fact or health care agent signs the PCR as the attorney-in-fact or health care agent (Probate Code § 4671).
- (e) When EMS members honor a DNR request, they should note on the PCR that a DNR request was presented and honored, and shall document the circumstances surrounding the DNR request on a PCR.
- (f) Base hospital contact should be made, the base hospital physician consulted and resuscitation initiated:
 1. If there are any questions concerning the validity of the DNR request.

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2. If a DNR request is incomplete or not signed.
 3. When a document other than those noted in this policy is presented.
 4. Any time EMS members have concerns or require assistance.
- (g) DNR patients who are in cardiopulmonary arrest should not be transported. EMS members shall contact local law enforcement and/or coroner's office to report the death and should support family members on-scene as appropriate.
- (h) DNR patients who decline transport to the hospital, including patients for whom transport is declined on their behalf, should not be transported. EMS members should make reasonable efforts to preserve the patient's privacy, dignity and comfort before leaving the scene.
- (i) If a DNR patient is transported to a hospital, the following shall apply:
1. A valid DNR request shall be honored during transport of the patient.
 2. The DNR request shall accompany the patient.
 3. The attorney-in-fact or health care agent (if applicable) should accompany the patient to the hospital.