
The Alaska Comfort One Program

Information for Health Care Providers

Overview

Some individuals who are terminally ill do not wish to have life saving measures, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), performed when they go into respiratory or cardiac arrest.

In October, 1996, Alaska law and regulations established the Comfort One Program to help health care providers identify terminally-ill people who have expressed these wishes. In addition, the Program established a protocol for health care providers to respect these wishes once the person has been identified as being enrolled in the Program.

This brochure is intended to provide health care providers with information on the Comfort One Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) protocol found in Alaska regulations (7 AAC 16.010 - 7 AAC 16.090).

Definition of Health Care Provider

Health care provider means a person who is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized or permitted by law to provide health care in the ordinary course of business or practice of a profession. For the purposes of this statute, an individual who is authorized to administer CPR appears to fall within the definition of a “health care provider” in AS 13.52.390(23) with respect to activities related to CPR. Consequently, even those providers authorized to administer only limited health care must, by statute, respect the Comfort One form, wallet card, or bracelet.

At the time a physician enrolls a patient in the Comfort One Program, the patient is given the original enrollment form and a wallet card. Patients and families are encouraged to keep them in a visible or easily accessible location.

The patient may choose to purchase a Comfort One bracelet. Bracelets are only available to those enrolled in the Comfort One Program and are particularly useful for patients who travel outside the home. Bracelets may be purchased through the patient’s physician or from a Regional EMS Council.

The Comfort One form, wallet card, and optional bracelet serve as proof to a health care provider that a patient is enrolled in the Program.

There are two steps to identifying a Do Not Resuscitate patient, which include confirming the identity of the patient and determining whether the patient has a valid DNR order.

It is important to ensure that both criteria are met prior to treating the patient as if he or she has a valid DNR order.

Patients with Out-of-State DNR Orders

A Do Not Resuscitate order issued in another state, territory, or possession of the United States is valid if it complies with Alaska law. A health care provider can presume, in the absence of actual notice to the contrary, that a DNR order and identification is valid, and treat the patient in accordance with the Alaska Comfort One protocol. (AS 13.52.150)

Revocation of DNR Orders

A Do Not Resuscitate order may be revoked by:

- the patient;
- the patient's physician;
- the parent or guardian of a DNR patient if the patient enrolled in the Comfort One Program is under 18 years of age.

The health care provider should carefully document the revocation. In some cases, the patient may simply destroy copies of the Comfort One form and wallet card.

The protocol (contained in state regulations) requires that the physician or other health care provider (EMT, Paramedic, etc.) immediately proceed with patient assessment and care, including administration of CPR, until the patient’s identity is confirmed and the patient is determined to have a valid DNR order.

Establishing the Patient’s DNR Status

The health care provider should establish the patient’s DNR status through at least one of the following means:

- Comfort One form or wallet card for the patient;
- Comfort One bracelet worn or carried by the patient;
- DNR identification for the patient that is from another state, territory, or possession of the United States;
- Physician's DNR order, when the order is in writing and a copy has been provided or seen by the physician or other health care provider; or
- Verbal order has been issued directly to the physician or health care provider by the patient’s physician.

Proof of Enrollment

Comfort One Identification Form

The Comfort One Identification form is printed on 8.5 “ x 11” carbonless paper with the Comfort One logo (see brochure cover page) printed at the top. The form contains the patient’s name, address, date of birth, and gender. To be valid, the form must be signed by both the patient, if the patient is able, and the patient’s physician.

Comfort One Wallet Card

The wallet card is detached from a larger form and measures approximately 2.5 inches x 3.5 inches. The Comfort One logo is printed at the top. The front of the wallet card contains the patient’s name, date of birth, and gender. A serial number is printed vertically on the front side of the card. The reverse side lists the name of the patient’s physician and the physician’s contact number.

Comfort One Bracelet

The bracelet has a gold chain, gold border, and a green background. The Comfort One logo is prominently displayed on the bracelet in white and gold lettering.



Optional bracelet with approved logo

Confirming the Patient’s Identity

Under the Alaska DNR protocol, the following are acceptable methods of confirming the patient’s identity:

- the patient communicating his/her name;
- the patient’s hospital or other institutional identification arm band;
- the patient being personally known to the physician or other health care provider;
- the patient’s driver’s license or credit card; or
- another person having identified the patient.

Do Not Resuscitate Protocol

Once the patient’s identity and DNR status have been confirmed, and the patient is pulseless or apneic, the protocol is easy to follow:

- If the patient **DOES NOT** have a valid DNR order, the standard treatment and transport guidelines, including CPR, should be employed.
- If the patient **DOES** have a valid DNR order, resuscitation efforts should not be initiated or, if already in progress, terminated immediately.
- If, while providing emergency medical services to a patient in the field, the provider causes the patient to require CPR or other resuscitative measures, CPR may be performed on the patient **ONLY** if ordered by an online physician providing medical direction to the field health care providers. “Health care provider” does not include a physician, and “in the field” does not include any health care facility.

Palliative Care

Health care personnel should provide comfort care as appropriate for the patient and within the scope of lawful activities for the individual health care provider.



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