

PATHWAYS ABILITIES SOCIETY

POLICY: DEATH, DYING AND DO NOT RESUSCITATE (DNR) ORDERS

Applies to: All Personnel, Volunteers and Persons Served

PREAMBLE

Death is a natural part of the life cycle. Whether it is anticipated or unexpected, it can be very traumatic. At some point, everyone faces grieving the loss of a loved one. Grieving is a natural part of the process and is individually experienced.

Planning for future health care, including end-of-life decisions, can be addressed well in advance before an individual is deemed palliative by a physician and requires end-of-life care. This discussion includes going of beliefs, values and wishes for health care with their close support network.

Historically, people with disabilities have been subjected to the inappropriate use of DNR orders, largely due to a lack of understanding on the part of medical personnel regarding the differences between an illness and a disability.

At the end stages of life or an irreversible terminal illness, there comes a point where providing life-sustaining treatment (such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation) is futile and a DNR order is appropriate. In these cases, providing CPR either prolongs the dying process, or (and more likely) hastens it in a very unpleasant manner (e.g., punctured lungs, broken ribs from CPR on a frail or elderly person). People who are in the process of dying deserve care and comfort, not a prolonged dying process.

Consent to a DNR order lies at the heart of this issue. The people in our society who are the most vulnerable should not be at risk for DNR orders when they have a treatable health care condition nor should they be exposed to an unnecessarily prolonged dying process at the end stages of life.

POLICY

Pathways Abilities Society will orientate all staff to Community Living BC's End of Life policy and procedure. A copy of the policy and procedure are attached to this policy.

Pathways Abilities Society will provide staff, volunteers and persons served with information on managing grief and/or direct them to the appropriate supports or services.

Pathways Abilities Society will adhere to the reporting requirements of our contracts.

Pathways Abilities Society will provide services to people with disabilities who have DNR orders in place providing the DNR order is done in consent with the person, their family and the physician and when someone is in the irreversible terminal stages of an illness or when the process of giving CPR could potentially cause significant trauma to the individual. Careful consideration and planning will occur prior to the implementation of a DNR order. Individuals served who have a DNR order must ensure that Pathways has the current order on file.

Effective/Revision Date

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April 28, 2003
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Board Approval

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