

POLST Conversations for Patients entering Hospice



If the patient does not have DNR/DNI or Comfort Care orders:

"In Hospice, our goal is to provide the most physical, emotional and spiritual comfort possible at the end of our patient's life. We avoid the use of aggressive invasive medical treatments in our patients. Examples of aggressive medical treatment include Intensive Care, mechanical breathing machines, major surgery, and kidney dialysis. We believe these treatments are often contrary to a natural peaceful death.

We use the Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form to convey patient wishes on these types of treatments to the health care team. This form is used throughout Minnesota so that our patients and their families, our nurses and doctors, as well as paramedics and emergency doctors understand what types of treatments a patient does and does not want. We recommend the following choices on the POLST form that we believe will allow for a more peaceful and dignified death."

- *"Do Not Resuscitate" or DNR order means that at the time of death, a natural death is allowed.*

**Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is not considered a useful or effective treatment in a patient who has reached their end of life from a terminal illness.*

- *Our goal is Comfort Care. We would provide all care necessary to assure comfort in our patient's home. We work with our patients and their family so comfort can be maintained in the home and avoid hospitalization unless it is necessary for comfort. An example of this would be a patient who fell and suffered a fracture. Sending our patient to the hospital may be necessary for the purpose of providing comfort.*

We would ask you to call Hospice for all urgent medical concerns and avoid calling 911.

An antibiotic may be used for comfort such as for a painful bladder infection. Ordinarily that would mean oral antibiotics.

Food and liquids are offered by mouth in Hospice – as long as the patient can comfortably swallow.

In patients who are dying their appetite diminishes; they lose interest in eating. So, hunger is rarely a concern. Thirst is relieved by keeping the oral membranes moist with ice chips, sips of water or swabs.

If the patient has DNR/DNI or Comfort Care orders:

"You [or your loved one] have doctor's orders that give direction to us and other health care providers concerning the type of medical care you want – most importantly in urgent situations.

I would like to confirm those orders with you, and I want to explain the options according to what we would call a Hospice philosophy of care."

- *A "Do Not Resuscitate" or DNR order means at the time of death, a natural death is allowed.*
**Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is not considered a useful or effective treatment in a patient who has reached their end of life from a terminal illness.*
- *Our goal is Comfort Care. This means we focus on maintaining comfort in our patient's home. We avoid hospitalizing our patients unless it's necessary for comfort. An example of this would be a patient who fell and suffered a fracture. Sending our patient to the hospital may be necessary for the purpose of providing comfort.*

We would ask you to call Hospice for all urgent medical concerns and avoid calling 911. We have nurses and doctors available around the clock.

- *An antibiotic may be used for comfort such as for a painful bladder infection. Ordinarily that would mean oral antibiotics – antibiotics given by mouth.*

Food and liquids are offered by mouth in Hospice – as long as the patient can comfortably swallow. In patients who are dying their appetite diminishes; they lose interest in eating. So, hunger is rarely a concern. Thirst is relieved by keeping the oral membranes moist with ice chips, sips of water or swabs.