



# Washington State Hospital Association

## Standardization of Color-Coded Wristbands in Washington *Implementation Toolkit*

*Do Not Resuscitate*



*Allergy Alert*



*Fall Risk*



**Washington State Hospital Association**

**Address:** 300 Elliott Avenue West, Suite 300 • Seattle, WA 98119

**Phone:** (206) 577-1831 **Binder Website:** <http://www.wsha.org/page.cfm?ID=0195>

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Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) produced these materials based on documents from the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association and other hospital associations.

“Zero errors that affect patient’s health”

# Standardization of Color-Coded Wristbands in Washington State



Carol Wagner  
Vice President, Patient Safety  
Washington State Hospital Association  
300 Elliott Ave W, Suite 300  
Seattle, WA 98119  
(206) 577-1831  
[carolw@wsha.org](mailto:carolw@wsha.org)

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To download a copy of this toolkit, go to  
<http://www.wsha.org/page.cfm?ID=0195>



# Executive Summary

Do Not Resuscitate



Allergy Alert



Fall Risk





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## Color-Coded Wristbands

### Executive Summary

### Overview

Washington hospitals provide very good care for patients. Yet, we know more needs to be done to make care safer. Across the nation, hospitals are looking for ways that they can reduce the risk of harm to patients. In reviewing adverse event data from across the nation, it was identified that some errors have come from the variation in the use of color-coded wristbands by hospitals. In December 2005, a patient safety advisory was issued that brought to light an incident that occurred in a hospital in which clinicians nearly failed to rescue a patient whose heart stopped because the patient was incorrectly designated as Do Not Resuscitate or “DNR.”

The source of confusion was the different practices between hospitals on color-coded wristbands. A nurse placed a yellow wristband on a patient. In that hospital, a yellow wristband meant DNR. In the nearby hospital, where the nurse also worked, yellow meant “restricted extremity” which was what she was trying to communicate to other staff. Fortunately, another nurse recognized the mistake and the patient was resuscitated.

As a result, there is a national effort underway to standardize the colors and wording on wristbands.

*A color-coded wristband is a means to convey or communicate important medical information or an alert about the status of a patient.*

This binder is based on the national agreement of the colors that should be used by hospitals if they use color-coded wristbands. The Washington State Hospital Association is supporting this effort at the request of members who are looking for ways to reduce harm to patients. They believe this process is important because many of our staff and physicians work in multiple hospitals. The Washington State Nurses Association supports this effort.



As part of this process, the Washington State Hospital Association conducted a survey to measure the variation in use of color-coded wristbands in Washington hospitals.

Following are the survey results for Washington –

Types of Wristbands	Color	Percent of Washington Hospitals Already Using
Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)	Purple	50%
Allergy Alert	Red	76%
Fall Risk	Yellow	78%

These are the same colors which have been agreed to nationally and implemented in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and now the state of Washington. The wristbands look like:

***Do Not Resuscitate***



***Allergy Alert***



***Fall Risk***

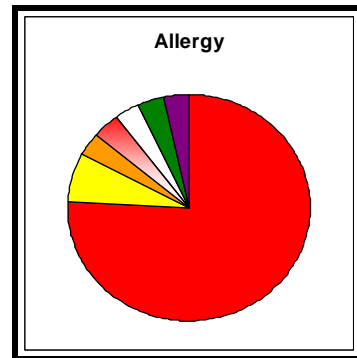


*The information presented in this binder is not meant to encourage the use of color-coded wristbands, but to increase safety in those hospitals that use them.*

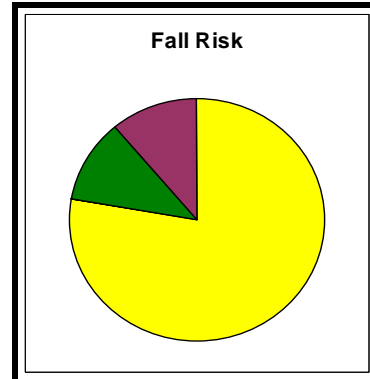


## Results of Color-Coded Wristbands Survey in Washington Hospitals

Allergy	Percentage of Time Hospitals Use This Color
Red	76%
Yellow	7%
Orange	3%
Clear	3%
Green	3%
Purple	3%
Red & White	3%



Fall Risk	Percentage of Time Hospitals Use This Color
Yellow	78%
Green	11%
Purple	11%



DNR	Percentage of Time Hospitals Use This Color
Red	8%
Yellow	8%
Green	17%
Purple	50%
Pink	8%
Blue	8%

