



THE COLORS OF SAFETY

ACROSS THE CONTINUUM OF CARE

Purpose

The *Colors of Safety Across the Continuum of Care* initiative is intended to enhance patient safety by standardizing the color-coding of specific alert conditions across acute and long term care settings. This initiative seeks to spread awareness about these standardized identifiers among clinical and non-clinical staff in health care settings as well as to patients, residents, and their families.

The *Colors of Safety Across the Continuum of Care* is a risk-reduction strategy that strives to:

- ensure accurate and timely identification of patients/residents with certain alert conditions by standardizing the colors used to represent such alert conditions; and
- reduce variation in the clinical setting by:
 - > reducing the potential for misidentifying patients (and its associated errors)
 - > reducing the time needed to orient staff; and
 - > improving staff satisfaction.

The *Colors of Safety Across the Continuum of Care* will include standardization for the following three alert conditions and colors:

Alert Condition		Color
Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)	→	Purple
Allergies	→	Red
Fall Risk	→	Yellow

Recommendations for Participating Organizations and Staff

- Remove patient wristbands that have been applied from another facility.
- For an organization that chooses to use text in addition to color-coding, all labeling for alert conditions should be done electronically or with pre-printed text to avoid the possibility of misinterpretation caused by illegible handwriting, to assist color blind individuals, and to provide a redundant process for proper identification of the condition.
- If there is concern about a patient's skin integrity or other medical condition, consider using alternative devices instead of color-coded wristbands (e.g., color-coded dots in strategic places or on medical records).
- Educate patients, residents, and family members about this program.
- Verify the accuracy of wristband colors and other means of identifying alert conditions with the medical record and patient, resident, and family members.
- Consider incorporating color-coding into the nursing assessment to confirm or reconfirm alert conditions during hand-offs and for change-of-shift reports.
- Indicate clearly which categories of staff are authorized to place wristbands on patients.