**Staff Education – The Tools** continued

4. **Tri-fold brochure called Staff Education Regarding: Color-coded “alert” wristbands**

(Document Provided)

Most people will use this brochure as the main teaching material. It contains most of the pertinent information staff need to know for this initiative. We suggest you do not give out the brochure until the end of your session because people may start reading the brochure instead of listening to you. Pass it out at the end of the session, but tell them upfront that there is a brochure with all of the information you are presenting and you will pass it out later.
How this all got started...

In 2005, a hospital in Pennsylvania submitted a report to the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Reporting System (PA-PSRS) describing an event in which clinicians nearly failed to rescue a patient who had a cardiopulmonary arrest because the patient had been incorrectly designated as “DNR” (Do Not Resuscitate). The source of the confusion was that a nurse had incorrectly placed a yellow wristband on the patient. In this hospital, the color yellow signified that the patient should not be resuscitated. In a nearby hospital, in which this nurse also worked, yellow signified “restricted extremity,” meaning that this arm is not to be used for drawing blood or obtaining IV access. Fortunately in this case, another clinician identified the mistake and the patient was resuscitated. However, this “near miss” highlights a potential source of error and an opportunity to improve patient safety by re-evaluating the use of color-coded wristbands.*

We want to thank and acknowledge this hospital for its transparency and disclosure of this event. It could have happened anywhere, and it has served as a “wake-up call” to many of us.

*To view the entire report go to http://www.psa.state.pa.us/psa/lib/psa/advisories/v2_s2_sup___advisory_dec_14_2005.pdf

What about Iowa?

Iowa hospitals seek to provide safe and high-quality patient care. We accomplish this in several ways, one of which is to standardize the colors for “alert” wristbands. Most hospitals are adopting the same colors so, regardless of which hospital you work at today or tomorrow, the color for Allergy, Fall Risk, or “DNR” (Do Not Resuscitate) alert wristbands should be the same.

The Big Picture

This initiative is being adopted by hospitals throughout the nation. That means, whether you are traveling on vacation to these states or relocated to work in another state, participating hospitals will be using the following colors:

- RED means ALLERGY ALERT
- YELLOW means FALL RISK
- PURPLE means “DNR”
Color-coded “Alert” Wristbands – A Statewide Patient Safety Initiative

IHC conducted a survey in July 2008 of Iowa hospitals to evaluate our risk for such an event. The results showed that six different colors and various methods were being used to designate the DNR status with patient wristbands.

Our risk was apparent.
We identified the need to standardize the colors being used for Allergies, Fall Risk, and DNR.

Our answer is participation in this project.

How to tell the patients what the different colors mean?

How we say something is just as important as what we say. The next column is a script you can use to tell your patients/families about the color-coded “alert” wristbands and what they mean. If everyone says it the same, there is a better chance patients and families will understand what we are saying.

SCRIPT
For any staff person talking to a patient or family

What is a Color-coded “alert” wristband?
Color-coded alert wristbands are used in hospitals to quickly communicate a certain healthcare status, condition, or “alert” that a patient may have. This is done so every staff member can provide the best care possible.

What do the colors mean?
There are three different color-coded “alert” wristbands that we are going to discuss because they are the ones most commonly used.

RED means ALLERGY ALERT
If a patient has an allergy to anything - food, medicine, dust, grass, pet hair, ANYTHING – tell us. It may not seem important to you but it could be very important in the care he/she receives.

YELLOW means FALL RISK
We want to prevent falls at all times. Nurses review patients throughout their stay to determine if they need extra attention in order to prevent a fall. Sometimes a person may become weakened during his/her illness or following surgery. When a patient has this color-coded alert wristband, the nurse is saying this person needs to be assisted when walking or he/she may fall.

PURPLE means “DNR” or Do Not Resuscitate
Some patients have expressed an end-of-life wish and we want to honor it.

Other Risk Reduction Strategies Staff Should Know

Color-coded “Alert” Wristbands/ Risk Reduction Strategies Quick Reference Card
1. Use wristbands with the alert message pre-printed (such as “DNR”).
2. Remove any “social cause” colored wristbands (such as “Live Strong”).
3. Remove wristbands that have been applied from another facility.
4. Initiate banding upon admission, changes in condition, or when information is received during the hospital stay.
5. Educate patients and family members regarding the wristbands.
6. Coordinate chart/white board/care plan/door signage information/stickers with same color coding.
7. Educate staff to verify patient color-coded “alert” wristbands upon assessment, hand-off of care, and facility-to-facility transfer communication.