



UNDERSTANDING GREEN SLEEVES & GOALS OF CARE DESIGNATION (GCD)

Written By: Emma Torneiro

The initiation of advanced care planning can be overwhelming and daunting due to the common association with end of life, the unfamiliarity with the tools needed for advanced care planning, or difficulty starting the conversations around planning for the future. However, it is important to plan for our futures, including outlining our medical choices. One of the best places to start the process is with the completion of your Green Sleeve and Goals of Care Designation documents.

Green Sleeve

The Green Sleeve is defined as an individual medical passport, recognized by Alberta Health Services, containing essential documents for advanced care planning. The documents within the Green Sleeve outline your choices on future medical and healthcare decisions in the event you are unable to advocate for yourself; this could be due to communication or cognitive issues as an example. These future medical and healthcare decisions can include choices such as where you want to reside as you age (at home, assisted living, long-term care etc.), what life-saving medical procedures you would want, guidelines for medical decisions, and information on the most important aspects for you regarding quality of life.

The Green Sleeve is used for emergency situations, situations involving the inability to advocate for yourself, medical decisions once a Personal Directive is enacted, or situations involving changes to capacity for decision-making processes. The Green Sleeve can include the Goals of Care Designation order, Advanced Care Planning/Goals of Care Designation Tracking Record, a copy of your Personal Directive, a copy of Guardianship Orders, and Expected Death in Home form. Once the updated forms have been placed in the Green Sleeve, it should be stored on/near the fridge, where first responders are trained to look for it. The Green Sleeve will be transported with you to hospital during emergency situations or can be brought to important medical appointments with you.

The Green Sleeve is an important document for all Albertans over the age of 18 to have in place. The documents are filled out in partnership with your healthcare team and shared with family members or agent(s) listed in your Personal Directive. The Green Sleeve is extremely important to complete to ensure your healthcare and medical wishes are known and followed by health care providers in any setting. The documents provide health care professionals direct access to your goals of care, directions for interventions, and future medical decisions when you are unable to

Understanding Green Sleeves & Goals of Care Designation (GCD)

self-advocate. It is important to complete the Green Sleeve early, before an emergency, to ensure you have sufficient time to reflect on your decisions and reduce the potential stress that can be associated with the process of advanced care planning.

If you don't have a Green Sleeve, contact us at 1-800-561-1911 to request one.

Goals of Care Designation (GCD) Order

The Goals of Care Designation order, which is stored within the Green Sleeve, is a medical order form stating your general care wishes, location of care, and transfer options for care in Alberta. The order is completed with and signed off by a healthcare practitioner overseeing your care (e.g., family physician or neurologist), who will provide expertise to assist in selecting the level of care within the medical order that aligns with your individual values, beliefs, and future care choices. The conversations with your healthcare team related to the Goals of Care Designation order are tracked using the Advanced Care Planning/Goals of Care Designation Tracking Record and stored within the Green Sleeve for future reference. The Goals of Care Designation acts as an instructional communication tool between yourself as the patient and the healthcare team providing care when you're unable to self-advocate. The order guides healthcare teams to provide timely care that aligns with your pre-determined medical choices and personal values. It is recommended that the Goals of Care Designation order be completed early, similar to the Green Sleeve. The document should be reviewed and updated if new health concerns arise, or if there are significant changes to current health concerns. As Parkinson's is a progressive neurodegenerative disease, the Goals of Care Designation and Green Sleeve should be updated regularly to accommodate changes that occur with the disease.

The Goals of Care Designation order contains three (3) levels of care:

- » Resuscitative (R),
- » Medical (M), and
- » Comfort (C).

References

Alberta Health Services. (2023). *Frequently Asked Questions Advanced Care Planning/ Goals of Care*. Alberta Health Services. <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page15938.aspx#whatgcd>

Palliative and End of Life Care Team, AHS. (April 2, 2018). *Goals of Care Designations*. Government of Alberta. <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/Pages/goals-of-care-designations.aspx?hwid=fdmostSgkM>

Palliative and End of Life Care Team, AHS. (April 2, 2018). *Green Sleeve*. Government of Alberta. <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/Pages/green-sleeve.aspx?hwid=TFiJW8-S9c4>

The levels are further categorized by 2-3 levels according to the medical procedures included within each.

The level of Resuscitative Care focuses on life-sustaining care and prolonging life by curing or controlling health conditions, when possible and when beneficial. The level includes diverse intensive medical and surgical interventions, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), life support interventions such as a ventilating machine, admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for treatment, and medications to manage medical condition(s).

The level of Medical Care focuses on prolonging life and management of treatable health conditions without the use of resuscitative supports or admission to the ICU. The M level is utilized when intensive interventions (e.g., CPR) are unlikely to work or unlikely to restore health to previous state. The level includes fewer intensive treatments, such as blood transfusion, feeding tubes, or the use of medication.

The final level, Comfort Care, focuses on the implementation of care, interventions, and medical treatments that provide comfort, relief, and support to reduce symptoms. The C level does not include resuscitative treatments or cure medical conditions. In contrast, the level could include medical treatments for pain or difficulty breathing. The C level is commonly associated with palliative care and occurs in a variety of settings, such as ICU, hospice, long-term care facility, or in home. The primary focus of level C is preparing for imminent death and maximizing comfort during this time.

The conversations surrounding advanced care planning can be difficult to navigate and challenging to share with loved ones. The completion of the Green Sleeve and Goals of Care Designation order can be the initial steps to successfully planning for the future to advocate for your healthcare wishes and ensuring the medical decisions align with your personal values, beliefs, and ideas on quality of life.