

Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc.

## NEWS



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### **Wisconsin Hospitals Standardize Patient Color-Coded Alerts**

#### ***Wisconsin Hospital Association led statewide effort***

**MADISON (March 5, 2009)** --- As of March 1, more than 80 percent of the hospitals in Wisconsin have met the voluntary standard set by the Wisconsin Hospital Association to standardize their color-coded patient alerts. The WHA Board of Directors set a goal in 2008 to encourage all hospitals in Wisconsin to implement the standard by March 1. Color-coded wristbands and other visual communication tools used in hospitals alert physicians, nurses and other health care professions to a patient's unique needs and wishes.

Many Wisconsin hospitals use color-coded alerts as a way of quickly identifying important information about patients. Wristbands, stickers and placards are commonly used to identify allergy warnings, fall risks, or do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders. However, until now, there has not been a standard that offers direction to hospitals as to what color identifies which alert. Many health professionals work in multiple health care settings, so they must memorize multiple, sometimes conflicting, color-coded alert systems.

The move to standardize color-coded alerts was fueled by reports of serious medical errors being narrowly averted. Standardization of these alerts improves communication across the state and reduces the risk of an error when patients are transferred from one hospital to another, or physicians and staff work in more than one hospital.

"We have a lot of movement of both patients and health care providers in multiple settings, even across state lines," according to Dana Richardson, WHA vice president of quality initiatives. "Standardizing how we alert these professionals to patient conditions just makes good sense. It is our hope to eventually see a national color standard set for these alerts."

Wisconsin and Minnesota have standardized to the same set of colors, while Illinois, Michigan and Indiana are currently reviewing their alert systems.

The standardized colors chosen for alerts in Wisconsin are:

- White or Clear for Patient Identification
- Purple for Do Not Resuscitate
- Red for Allergy
- Yellow for Fall Risk

"Although we did not meet 100 percent goal of statewide standardization by March 1, we are thrilled to be so close, and we are aware of more hospitals that will have this process

in place very soon," according to Richardson. "This voluntary, statewide standardization project is yet another example of our hospitals' commitment to work together to improve the safety of the care they provide to their patients," she added.

Richardson said hospitals are asking patients to remove "social cause" wristbands, which can also be a potential source of confusion for care givers.

For more information related to the color code alert standards and patient safety, visit: [www.wiCheckPoint.org](http://www.wiCheckPoint.org). Click on consumer information.

A list of hospitals that have standardized their color-coded alerts follows:

Agnesian HealthCare/St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac  
Amery Regional Medical Center, Amery  
Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Wausau  
Aurora BayCare Medical Center, Green Bay  
Aurora Lakeland Medical Center, Elkhorn  
Aurora Medical Center in Two Rivers  
Aurora Medical Center in Hartford  
Aurora Medical Center, Oshkosh  
Aurora Medical Center-Kenosha, Kenosha  
Aurora Memorial Hospital of Burlington, Burlington  
Aurora Psychiatric Hospital, Wauwatosa  
Aurora Sheboygan Memorial Medical Center, Sheboygan  
Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee  
Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee  
Aurora St. Luke's South Shore, Cudahy  
Aurora West Allis Medical Center, West Allis  
Baldwin Area Medical Center, Baldwin  
Bay Area Medical Center, Marinette  
Beaver Dam Community Hospitals, Inc., Beaver Dam  
Bellin Hospital, Green Bay  
Bellin Psychiatric Center, Green Bay  
Beloit Memorial Hospital, Beloit  
Berlin Memorial Hospital, Berlin  
Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls  
Boscobel Area Health Care, Boscobel  
Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg  
Calumet Medical Center, Chilton  
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, Neenah  
Chippewa Valley Hospital, Durand  
Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center, Milwaukee  
Columbus Community Hospital, Columbus  
Community Memorial Hospital, Menomonee Falls  
Community Memorial Hospital, Oconto Falls  
Cumberland Memorial Hospital, Inc., Cumberland  
Curative Care Network, Milwaukee  
Flambeau Hospital, Park Falls  
Fort HealthCare, Fort Atkinson  
Franciscan Skemp Healthcare-Mayo Health System, Arcadia

Franciscan Skemp Healthcare-Mayo Health System, La Crosse  
Franciscan Skemp Healthcare-Mayo Health System, Sparta  
Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital, Milwaukee  
Grant Regional Health Center, Lancaster  
Hayward Area Memorial Hospital, Hayward  
Holy Family Memorial, Inc., Manitowoc  
Hudson Hospital & Clinics, Hudson  
Indianhead Medical Center/Shell Lake, Shell Lake  
Kindred Hospital Milwaukee, Greenfield  
Lakeview Medical Center, Rice Lake  
Lakeview Specialty Hospital and Rehab, Waterford  
Langlade Hospital - An Aspirus Partner, Antigo  
Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire  
Luther Midelfort Chippewa Valley, Bloomer  
Luther Midelfort Northland, Barron  
Luther Midelfort Oakridge, Osseo  
Memorial Health Center, Medford  
Memorial Hospital of Lafayette Co., Darlington  
Memorial Medical Center, Ashland  
Mercy Health System Corporation, Janesville  
Mercy Medical Center, Oshkosh  
Mercy Walworth Hospital and Medical Center, Lake Geneva  
Meriter Hospital, Madison  
Mile Bluff Medical Center, Mauston  
Ministry Health Care - Door County Memorial Hospital, Sturgeon Bay  
Ministry Health Care - Eagle River Memorial Hospital, Eagle River  
Ministry Health Care - Good Samaritan Health Center, Merrill  
Ministry Health Care - Howard Young Medical Center, Woodruff  
Ministry Health Care - Our Lady of Victory Hospital, Stanley  
Ministry Health Care - Sacred Heart Hospital, Tomahawk  
Ministry Health Care - Saint Clare's Hospital, Weston  
Ministry Health Care - Saint Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield  
Ministry Health Care - Saint Mary's Hospital, Rhinelander  
Ministry Health Care - Saint Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point  
Monroe Clinic, Monroe  
Moundview Memorial Hospital & Clinics, Inc., Friendship  
Osceola Medical Center, Osceola  
Prairie du Chien Memorial Hospital, Prairie du Chien  
Red Cedar Medical Center, Mayo Health System, Menomonie  
Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg  
Richland Hospital, Richland Center  
Riverview Hospital Association, Wisconsin Rapids  
Rusk County Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home, Ladysmith  
Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire  
Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital, Prairie du Sac  
Southwest Health Center, Platteville  
Spooner Health System, Spooner  
St. Clare Hospital & Health Services, Baraboo  
St. Croix Regional Medical Center, St. Croix Falls  
St. Elizabeth Hospital, Appleton  
St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls

St. Joseph's Hospital, West Bend  
St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay  
St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan  
St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay  
Stoughton Hospital Association, Stoughton  
Tomah Memorial Hospital, Tomah  
Upland Hills Health, Inc., Dodgeville  
UW Health Partners Watertown Regional Medical Center, Watertown  
Waukesha Memorial Hospital, Waukesha  
Waupun Memorial Hospital, Waupun  
Westfields Hospital, New Richmond  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-All Saints, Racine  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-Elmbrook Memorial, Brookfield  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-Franklin, Franklin  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Joseph, Milwaukee  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-The Wisconsin Heart Hospital, Wauwatosa  
Wild Rose Community Memorial Hospital, Wild Rose

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