

Death of a Patient

Revised October 2021

Previous Revision July 2016

Policy

CommuniCare Therapy policy is to manage, report and document patient death in a manner which protects patient dignity and provides support to caregivers and independent practitioners.

CommuniCare Therapy has established policies regarding the death of a patient to ensure that independent practitioners are aware of the appropriate steps to follow.

Procedure

At the start of care clinicians should inform themselves on whether there are any end-of-life instructions/planning in place (e.g., do not resuscitate-DNR, expected death in the home-EDITH etc.). Being aware of and end of life plans and who the key contacts are will help prepare a clinician in the eventuality the information is needed.

1. Should the independent practitioner arrive at the patient's home to find the patient unconscious, the independent practitioner should check for vital signs. Unless the independent practitioner is aware of a "do not resuscitate" order they should start appropriate resuscitation as per CPR protocol and to the extent of their training (i.e., CPR certification or First Aid Training). The independent practitioner should have someone call 911; if no one is available to make the call the independent practitioner is to attempt to revive the patient and then make the phone call.
2. Should the patient be pronounced dead, the police are responsible for contacting the coroner, notifying the next of kin and for making arrangements for the care of any dependents or pets. The independent practitioner is responsible for contacting CommuniCare Therapy and the appropriate contracting partner (i.e., Care Coordinator) by direct phone call to relay the information of the patient's death.
3. In the case of an expected death (i.e., a terminally ill patient) the independent practitioner should be aware of the End-of-Life planning that has been put in place. If patient death occurs during the service visit the clinician and the clinician is alone with the patient, the clinician should call 911 to allow for the proper authorities to manage the situation. In most cases if family are present, they will take responsibility for next steps. Clinician should confirm with the appropriate authority (police, paramedics, coroner etc.) prior to leaving. The independent practitioner is responsible for contacting CommuniCare Therapy, the contracting partner (i.e., Care Coordinator) by direct phone call to relay the information of the patient's death.

In any of the above cases, the independent practitioner should contact their manager to apprise them of the situation. Dependent on the situation it may be necessary to complete a risk event incident report as per the P&P on Event Reporting. The Quality Manager will determine if the event meets the contracting partner reporting criteria.



In all cases the independent practitioner should ensure documentation of the death and the steps they took within the patient chart (AlayaCare). The independent practitioner must also complete and submit a Discharge Service Provider Report.

CommuniCare Therapy will provide education and/or reference/resources documents on the expected death in the home protocols from their contracting partners so that independent practitioners are well informed.

Witnessing or discovery of a death in the home, may cause upset or trauma to the independent practitioner. Individuals are encouraged to reach out to their Program Manager should support be required to assist them in processing the event so that the appropriate arrangements and guidance can be made.