



A Guide to POLST

POLST is short for “Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment.” A POLST form is a form that doctors or other health professionals complete when caring for patients who are frail or seriously ill. The POLST form is a way for patients to make clear their goals and wishes about medical care.

Most, but not all, states use a version of the POLST form. Some states refer to it as MOLST (“Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment”) form, or a MOST, SMOST, or POST form.

About POLST Forms



How does a POLST form help?

The POLST form helps patients who are seriously ill control the type and amount of medical care they get. Some patients want to have all possible medical treatments, in hopes of living as long as they can. Others only want care that helps reduce pain and increase comfort, even if this means not living much longer. Many patients want a mix of some medical treatment with comfort care.



Who can use a POLST form?

A POLST form is only for patients who are frail or seriously ill.

This form is not to be used by patients who are healthy.

- Choose a time when you are with loved ones or others who might be involved with your care.
- The POLST form is voluntary. That means each patient can decide whether or not to use a POLST form.

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Where is the POLST form used?

The POLST form travels with patients. This form is used at home, in the emergency room, at the hospital, or in a nursing facility. Paramedics, emergency room doctors, EMTs and other medical personnel must follow POLST.

When patients do not have a POLST form, medical personnel must try all medical treatments that could prolong life. But doing so can be a problem. For instance, patients who are frail or very ill might not do well with CPR or other invasive medical procedure given in a hospital's emergency room or intensive care unit.



How Can I Learn More About the POLST form?

The POLST form is one way to make sure that your wishes are honored and respected when you are too ill or frail to speak for yourself. Ask if your doctor should complete a POLST form with you.

To learn more, please visit www.polst.org

P  L S T

physician orders for life-sustaining treatment paradigm