

Introduction to the POLST Form

The Pennsylvania Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form is a medical order that gives patients more control over their end-of-life care. POLST is always voluntary and completed only after a discussion of health care treatment choices between a health care professional and patient or his/her legal decision-maker.

The POLST form documents the types of treatments that seriously ill people want at the end of life. It travels with the patient to help assure that treatment preferences are honored across settings of care (hospital, nursing home, assisted living facility etc.). These medical orders are signed by a patient's physician, physician assistant or certified registered nurse practitioner and the patient or the patient's surrogate.

The form is intended for patients whose health care professional would not be surprised if they died within 1-2 years; who are at an increased risk of experiencing a medical emergency based on their current medical condition and who wish to make clear their treatment preferences, including about CPR, mechanical ventilation, ICU; or who have had multiple unplanned hospital admissions in the last 12 months, typically coupled with increasing frailty, decreasing function, and/or progressive weight loss. Patients who do not meet these criteria are not appropriate to have a POLST Form.

This form was developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Patient Life Sustaining Wishes Committee and designed to be consistent with Pennsylvania law. There are significant advantages in using a form that contains standardized language and is produced in a distinctive and easily recognizable format. In order to maintain continuity throughout Pennsylvania, please follow these printing instructions:

***** Print POLST form on Pulsar Pink card stock (65#) *****

Resources and educational information for the use of the POLST form are found on the Pennsylvania Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment website at the following two websites

- www.PAPOLST.org
- <https://www.upmc.com/services/seniors/resources-for-caregivers/advance-care-planning/polst>

For questions on POLST contact:
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