

Pennsylvania Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST)

Model Policies' Section - Introductory Notes

The following section provides model policies that define a process for general acute care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities to follow when a patient or resident presents with a Pennsylvania Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form. These policies also outline procedures regarding the completion of a POLST form for a patient or resident and the steps necessary when reviewing or revising a POLST form.

As general acute care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities begin to develop and implement their individual facility policy, it will be important to consider the following:

1. POLST is always voluntary.
2. The policies and procedures outlined in these documents provide guidance on the necessary steps for appropriate implementation of POLST in a general acute care hospital or skilled nursing facility. Individual hospitals and skilled nursing facilities are advised to adapt these policies and procedures in accordance with their existing structures and related policies.
3. In addition to administrative leadership and committees, facilities also should involve appropriate medical staff leadership and appropriate medical staff committees in the development of their POLST policy. Medical staff bylaws or rules and regulations should be reviewed and revised if necessary.
4. These model policies do not address all aspects of related issues to POLST, such as determination of decision making capacity and of a legally recognized health care decision-maker. Hospitals and skilled nursing facilities should refer to their specific and related policies on these matters.
5. Health care providers in general acute care hospitals and skilled nursing facilities, including physicians, should be educated and trained in the purpose of the POLST form, and on the facility's policy regarding implementation of the POLST form. This includes how to respond to questions from patients and residents or their legally recognized health care decision-makers regarding the specific interventions described in the POLST form.
6. The POLST form for Pennsylvania was recommended by the Patient Life-Sustaining Wishes Committee and approved by the Department of Health. You can download a copy of the form for printing at the POLST website at www.papolst.org.
7. Users should download and print the form on Pulsar Pink stock (#65). Although Pulsar Pink is the recognized and recommended color, the form remains valid if another color paper is used. Photocopies of the form are also valid.