

April 10, 2018

Lisa Weber
Columbus Community Hospital
3005 19th Street
Columbus, NE 68601
Sent via email: laweberdevoll@columbushosp.org

Dear Ms. Weber,

Thank you for the work that you and your Nebraska colleagues have done to develop your state POLST program: Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST). We appreciate the effort that starting your POLST program has involved and greatly appreciate your diligence in trying to implement a quality program across the state.

As you know, the National POLST Paradigm Task Force (Task Force) was created in 2004, in part, to establish quality standards for POLST programs. The Task Force endorses states that have proved their programs meet those standards. While the Task Force avoids frequent revisions of those standards, they are periodically reviewed and updated based on experiences in Endorsed states, quality reviews, and research regarding POLST forms and programs.

Due to increasing criticisms of and attacks on the POLST Paradigm, the Task Force decided to distinguish POLST Paradigm programs from those programs that may use "POLST" or a similar term but which are being implemented in a manner open to certain criticisms. These states are implementing their programs in such a manner that they are not currently on the pathway to becoming endorsed by the Task Force and are clearly identified on our website (www.polst.org/map) as a state with a program not conforming to POLST requirements by being shaded grey. This distinction and the explanation are increasingly important as the POLST Paradigm is misunderstood by those who are criticizing it. It is necessary for the Task Force to take action and distinguish such programs are not following the national model because they are causing confusion about the POLST Paradigm and, as a result, harming the reputation of states who have worked hard to become endorsed POLST Paradigm programs, meeting the high-quality consensus standards developed by the Task Force.

Unfortunately, Nebraska is a state that needs to be identified as not adhering to the POLST standards created by the Task Force for two reasons. First, although there are pilot programs in place and Nebraska has been working for years to develop a single POLST form, there is no agreement among leaders on a single form to use within the state. Statewide form uniformity and consistency is critical for the portability of the document throughout the state, for adopting EMS protocols that allow for implementation of POLST form orders, and for helping Nebraska patients have a form that is recognized and honored in other states during a medical crisis. Second, some of the pilots sites are using advance directive forms that adopt many POLST-like characteristics. These forms are likely to cause confusion when presented outside

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of Nebraska, which may result in patient treatment wishes not being honored during a medical crisis outside the state.

We appreciate that every state faces unique implementation challenges but the success of the National POLST Paradigm is contingent on all POLST Paradigm programs being unified and consistent in their programmatic approach, education, and form elements. It is only when program quality is uniform that we can achieve credibility, consistency, and reciprocity among all states—which will ensure the achievement of our goal that patients having their wishes honored, whenever they are in the United States during a medical crisis. The lack of a single state form, and the concern about the form some pilot sites are using, creates too much confusion towards our goal.

We regret having to make this decision. The National POLST Paradigm encourages all programs to achieve endorsement status and is happy to help provide technical assistance, mentorships, and other resources. We encourage you to continue your work and let us know how we can help.

If you would like to discuss this letter, please contact me at (202) 780-5738 or amy@polst.org. If you would like, we can also schedule a call with Nebraska leadership and the Program Assistance Committee to discuss this further.

This change is effective immediately.

Sincerely,



Amy Vandenbroucke, JD
Executive Director, National POLST Paradigm