

## National POLST: Frequently Asked Questions for Patients

### What is POLST?

POLST is a process that lets seriously ill patients take more control over certain health care treatments for when you cannot speak for yourself.

It involves conversations that result in a portable medical order form called a POLST form\*. If there's a time you are not able to speak for yourself, the POLST form tells health care providers what treatments you want and do not want.

\*There are 16 names for POLST (MOLST, MOST, POST, etc.) so your state may use call it something else (see [www.polst.org/map](http://www.polst.org/map), bottom of the page). It may not be available everywhere in your state.

### What is the POLST process?

POLST involves having you talk with your medical provider about your medical diagnosis and prognosis and whether life-saving measures—like CPR or mechanical ventilation—are what you would want, should you stop breathing or if your heart stops beating, given your current health status.

After discussing your preferences for CPR, ventilation and possibly other treatments, you then fill out a POLST form with your medical provider, who makes it effective immediately by signing and dating the form, much like a drug prescription. You and your provider should both retain a copy.

### POLST and Advance Directives

POLST isn't for everyone—POLST is designed for *seriously ill or frail* people who are at high risk of a life-threatening medical event. Those in hospice, nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities are most likely to be appropriate for POLST. It is always voluntary.

Healthy individuals should complete an advance directive. Here are the differences:

	Advance Directive	POLST Form
<b>Type of Document</b>	Legal Document.	Medical Order.
<b>Who Completes</b>	Individual.	Health Care Professional.
<b>Who Needs One</b>	All competent adults.	Seriously ill or frail (any age) for whom health care professional wouldn't be surprised if died within 1 year.
<b>Appoints a Surrogate</b>	Yes.	No.
<b>What is Communicated</b>	General wishes about treatment wishes. May help guide treatment plan after a medical emergency.	Specific medical orders for treatment wishes during a medical emergency.
<b>Can EMS Use</b>	No.	Yes.
<b>Ease in locating</b>	Not very easy to find. Depends on where patient keeps it and if they have told someone where it is, given a copy to surrogate or to health care professional to put in his/her medical record.	Very easy to find. Patient has original. Copy is in medical record. Copy may be in a Registry (if your state has a Registry).

Find the POLST contacts in your state at [polst.org/map](http://polst.org/map). Find more answers at [POLST Patient FAQs](#).