

Standard of Care and Advance Care Plan Documents

Standard of Care

The current **standard of care** during an emergency is to do everything possible in an attempt to save someone's life, unless there is a medical order to the contrary.

Advance Care Plan Documents

Advance Care Plan documents allow individuals to share their treatment preferences in the event they can no longer speak for themselves. There are two kinds:

	Legal Document	Medical Orders
Includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Directives • Living Wills • Health Care Power of Attorney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) Orders • POLST (e.g., Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) forms—name varies by state—see polst.org/map
Purpose	Identify a surrogate decision maker. Provide general wishes about treatments individual wants.	Communicates patient treatment wishes from the patient's primary provider to other providers, including emergency personnel, when the patient cannot speak for self.
Who Needs	All competent adults.	Patients at risk for a life-threatening clinical event because they have a serious life-limiting medical condition, which may include advanced frailty.
Can be Used During an Emergency	No. These are used to develop care plans but are not orders EMS can follow.	Yes. These are medical orders signed by health care professionals.

Key Differences Between Advance Directives and POLST forms

	Advance Directive	POLST Form
Type of Document	Legal Document.	Medical Order.
Who Completes	Individual.	Health Care Professional.
Who Needs One	All competent adults.	Seriously ill or frail (any age) for whom health care professional wouldn't be surprised if died within 1 year.
Appoints a Surrogate	Yes.	No.
What is Communicated	General wishes about treatment wishes. May help guide treatment plan after a medical emergency.	Specific medical orders for treatment wishes during a medical emergency.
Can EMS Use	No.	Yes.
Ease in locating	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).