

Hello “Endorsed with Distinction”! (and goodbye “Mature”)

POLST forms are *portable* medical orders. National POLST was created, in part, to create standards for POLST programs and forms. The goal was to help make sure POLST was similar if not the same everywhere — insuring its portability from state to state. To encourage POLST programs to follow these standards, in 2004 National POLST established an endorsement process: any state that met the national standards could be endorsed. (In 2017, active participation in National POLST governance became a second requirement for endorsement.)

To reinforce that endorsement was not the end goal and that it did not mean a program was done implementing POLST, in 2013, National POLST unveiled the “Mature” status designation. This designation recognized endorsed states where POLST had become standard of care. Three states achieved this designation: California, Oregon and West Virginia.

Over time, National POLST leaders recognized the requirements for “mature” status focused too heavily on the level of POLST use in a state rather than the elements needed for a high-quality, successful POLST Program. Instead of encouraging or recognizing POLST Programs excelling at other critical elements, such as education or sustainability, the “mature” designation created a financial or political barrier for most POLST Programs by essentially requiring them to have a well-established research program or registry.

In May 2019, the National POLST [Plenary Assembly](#) agreed to eliminate the “mature” designation and replace it with an “Endorsed with Distinction” designation. The Endorsed with Distinction designation will recognize those POLST Programs that have excelled in specific areas. In October 2020, the final details for the first four areas of distinction were approved (more areas of distinction are planned). The program will be rolled out in 2021.

Endorsed with Distinction identifies the multiple key components of a high-quality, successful POLST Program. It reinforces that endorsement is not—and should not be—the final goal for any POLST Program: implementation is not static, but constantly improving. The Plenary Assembly hopes this new way of recognizing POLST Programs will encourage more alignment with nationally recognized best-practices and greater integration of advanced features into programs, enhancing quality and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of POLST.

Endorsed programs will be encouraged to apply for these more achievable next steps and, after achieving one area of designation, the program will be able to promote themselves as “Endorsed with Distinction.” Once achieved, the appropriate image below will be put on the program’s page on www.polst.org/map and the program can use it to promote their achievement:



Professional Education



Quality



Sustainability



Patient/Public Education