



August 4, 2021

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Sent via email: phathaway@mha.org

Dear Ms. Fults,

Thank you for all the work that you and your Michigan colleagues have done to develop Michigan's POLST Program: Michigan Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (MI-POST). We appreciate the dedication it takes to implement a POLST program and are grateful Michigan is participating in National POLST, with Stephanie Van Slyke and Karen Smith as its representatives.

National POLST was created to encourage and promote implementation and uniformity among POLST Programs to ensure portability and standardized elements that reflect best practice across provider disciplines and settings. Our vision is for all patients to have a standardized form that is recognizable, portable and consistent across state lines and the continuum of care. To achieve this, there must be similarities among programs throughout the nation. When a state's form varies substantively from other POLST forms, it creates a burden on patients, families and providers, particularly when best practices are not reflected. This is our concern about Michigan's form.

While Michigan's form generally matches the form endorsement requirements and the National POLST form, there are problems that likely prevent it from being honored outside Michigan.

1. Section B, Medical Interventions. Rather than providing information about what medical interventions are covered with each option the form requires providers to have knowledge of or search for the specific Michigan regulations. This additional step is an unnecessary barrier in form completion and will likely create confusion for any provider outside of Michigan. It would be terrible if a Michigan patient's form is not honored because there is a lack of confidence that Michigan's interpretation of one of these options varies from the national standard. We strongly recommend Michigan remove regulatory or statutory references and use the language on the National form for each of these options.

2. The form lacks a specific section on artificial nutrition. In 2019, after reviewing evidence, clinical implications and reflecting on its philosophical foundation, POLST leaders reaffirmed its position that artificial nutrition belongs on POLST forms. Including artificial nutrition on the form supports having comprehensive conversations with patients regarding the need for treatments consistent with the patients' values, goals of care, and current condition.

There are other areas of this form that do not represent best practices, including:

- The limited amount of patient demographic information requested can prevent matching patients with electronic versions of their form;
- Not all required signatures are on the same page as the medical orders which can create confusion if the pages are separated;
- Including space for a diagnosis is not recommended to protect patient privacy; and
- Failure to include:
 - instructions for providers about how to complete or interpret the form;
 - instructions telling a patient how to void their POLST form;
 - information about whether faxes and copies are acceptable; and
 - contact information for questions about POLST or additional forms.

Finally, we strongly encourage changing the name of the form. Calling it a "physician order" when other health care professionals are able to sign it creates confusion.

In order to provide comprehensive information for those seeking to learn more about the Michigan POLST program, this letter will be shared on our website along with your contact information. Our goal is to encourage and assist all states in building consistency among their POLST programs to help patients and providers easily use this valuable resource. If you would like to discuss this letter, please contact Amy Vandenbroucke at (202) 780-5738 or amy@polst.org.

Sincerely,



Linda Darden, MFA
Chair, Plenary Assembly



Amy Vandenbroucke, JD
Executive Director

CC: Stephanie Van Slyke, BA, RN, HEC-C SVANSLYKE@mhc.net
Karen Smith, LMSW, PhD, HEC-C Ksmith67@hfhs.org

Helpful Resources:

- Program Endorsement Criteria: <https://polst.org/endorsement-application-pdf>
- National POLST Form & Guide: <https://polst.org/national-form>
- Signature Requirements: <https://polst.org/state-signature-requirements-pdf>
- Position on Artificial Nutrition: <https://polst.org/nutrition-statement-pdf>