

Recommendations for Integrating POLST Forms with Electronic Health Records

Health care professionals must have access to POLST forms during a medical emergency when the patient lacks capacity or the ability to communicate. Electronic health record (EHR) systems, also called electronic medical record systems, allow POLST forms to be immediately accessible. As implementation and meaningful use of EHRs is required through the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH Act)¹, health care facilities must consider how to best integrate POLST forms with their EHRs.

Formatting

Two formats to consider when integrating POLST within an EHR:

1. paper POLST form upload and storage within the EHR or
2. electronic POLST (ePOLST) where the POLST form is completed electronically.

Implementation and exchange of ePOLST forms should conform to current document and messaging standards (e.g., HL7). Depending on state electronic signature laws, an ePOLST may still need to be printed, signed, and then scanned into the EHR. A copy must be given to the patient (possibly on specifically colored paper). Because of the flexibility in form completion, increased accessibility to educational materials and improved ability for quality assurance activities, National POLST strongly encourages facilities to utilize electronic completion of POLST, but should utilize, when available, a statewide ePOLST system.

National POLST recommends that states adopt or adapt the National POLST form. The POLST CDA is based on the national form, though it allows variation to accommodate most state POLST forms.

Display

POLST forms should be displayed in a unique POLST field/tab accessible instantly within a single click from the EHR patient header or sidebar. The tab can be marked with a Yes or No box, so that the health care professional can see if a form exists before opening the tab. The unique POLST field with inpatient and outpatient EHR should only contain POLST medical orders and be independent of the advance directive information.

Retrieval/Archival

The EHR system should have the ability to rapidly receive and display the most recent document as determined by the date the POLST form was signed. Older versions should be archived and clearly demarcated as voided.

Health care professionals should be able to access POLST forms within the EHR system. Single sign-on should be enabled to ensure no additional username or password needs to be entered. (If the EHR system offers access to an external POLST form database or system it should be via a secure and authenticated portal, with an interoperable data exchange standard or link).

The most current POLST field within the inpatient or outpatient EHR should be easily accessible and viewable by the patient via any integrated patient portal.²

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/coveredentities/hitechact.pdf>

² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/34/text> (Section 4006)

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Find the most recent version at: <https://polst.org/ehr-recommendations-pdf>