

National POLST Quality Assurance Toolkits

Getting Started

Note on Terminology

POLST forms are known by different names in different states (see list [here](#)); the term POLST is used here for simplicity.

Specific to the PQRsT: The actual program names is used when referring to a specific program(s) or form(s). Each instrument's nomenclature has been retained to acknowledge the work that went into creating them and the creators' generosity in sharing them.

Suggestions for Getting Started

- For any quality assurance activity, it is important to understand the applicable state laws (this [comparison chart](#) may be helpful) and adapt these resources to the care setting.
- Be as clear as possible about why you are doing this study or undertaking this activity. This means having a clear question or questions that you want to answer and a fairly clear idea of what the results will look like when you collect them. This sounds obvious and simple but it's actually the hardest part. Too often people are doing research or quality work because it is expected. Instead, consider what results you need and have an idea of how you will use them (for example, improving the form, updating a process, providing education, etc).
- Because it is difficult to envision results before you get them, the best practice is to pilot test your study or quality assurance activity, look at the results, and informally analyze them. You will be surprised at how much this process helps you identify questions that, while they make sense, yield useless or unhelpful information, or difficult to summarize data. You don't want to learn this after having collected all your data!
- Consider getting input from people with research or quality assurance experience. National POLST can connect you! [Send an email to National POLST](#) to start a conversation.
- Expect obstacles and don't let them discourage you. No project is ever perfect. While often frustrating, obstacles are always opportunities to learn and some actually turn out to be important results.
- Be clear in your definitions! In the Quality Indicator Toolkit there is a section on Terminology that defines a valid POLST form, POLST appropriate patients, and internally consistent POLST orders. While these seem simple, they actually took a lot of collaboration to get the final language (and we encourage you to use the same definitions!)