

National POLST: Statement on Cost Avoidance

POLST was created to help patients who are considered to be at risk for a life-threatening clinical event because they have a serious life-limiting medical condition, which may include advanced frailty, receive goal concordant care.¹ The POLST protects a patient's rights to self-determination and communicates the patient's preferences for medical treatment by aligning with their current health status, prognosis, personal values and goals. Unlike an advance directive, the POLST reflects the patient's decisions as a portable medical order² effective immediately and actionable at all healthcare facilities by all health care professionals, including first responders.

A POLST is completed after a meaningful discussion and shared medical decision-making with their health care professional about their current goals of care, quality of life, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment options.

POLST benefits those patients who choose to receive fewer invasive medical interventions by reducing the administration of unwanted treatment, potentially helping them avoid dying at the hospital, if that is their preference. POLST also benefits those patients who choose invasive treatments to attempt to prolong their lives, by making those preferences clear in a medical order. Cost reduction may be a secondary effect for patients who choose less invasive treatment options, but that is an outcome based on the patient's treatment preferences identified on a POLST form, not based on cost avoidance.

Cost avoidance reflect those decisions but does not drive them.

¹ <https://polst.org/guidance-appropriate-patients-pdf>

² The term for this portable order varies by state: <https://polst.org/programs-in-your-state/>