

What is a POLST?

Key Facts About POLST for Individuals and Family Members

The Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form is a written order from a medical doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant that helps give people with serious illnesses more control over their own care. It can help make sure you get the care you want, and also to protect you from getting any medical treatments you DO NOT want.

- **Filling out a POLST is voluntary.** Nursing homes and assisted living facilities may include the POLST in their admission papers, but you are not required to complete a POLST if you do not wish to.
- **Don't complete the form until you've had an in-depth discussion.** You should not fill it out a POLST form until you've had a good talk with your doctor or another trained medical professional who can clarify the form's medical terms and options. This conversation is very important and will address your overall health, your health care wishes and goals for your care. It is very helpful to include your family members in the conversation, even if they are not your designated decision-maker, so they understand your health condition and are aware of your treatment wishes.
- **The POLST form is not valid until it is signed by both you (or your designated decisionmaker) AND your physician/nurse practitioner/physician assistant.**
- **A POLST form does NOT replace an advance directive.** An advance directive is still the best way to appoint a legal healthcare decisionmaker, and is recommended for all adults, regardless of your age or current health. A POLST works together with your advance directive, providing more specific detail regarding care wishes and goals of care during a serious illness or at the end of life.
- **The original bright pink form travels with you** to different settings – home, assisted living, nursing home or hospital. Wherever you go for care, the original pink form should go with you, and be kept in an easy to find place, like on your refrigerator.
- **You only have to complete a new POLST if your treatment wishes change.** You do not need to fill out a new POLST if you move from one facility to another, or change doctors.
- **Because the POLST form is a medical order, emergency medical personnel are required to follow its instructions** regarding CPR and other emergency medical care. The POLST form is printed on bright pink paper so it will be easily recognizable by all health care personnel.
- **You can change or void the POLST form, at any time.** To change your POLST instructions, complete a new POLST form, sign and date it, and have your doctor sign it. To void the old form, draw a line through sections A through D, write "VOID" in large letters, then sign and date the line.

Please go to: <http://www.capolst.org/> or call (916) 489-2222 for more information.