



Advance Care Planning: What is the POLST?

Frequently Asked Questions

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Making sure your doctor and loved ones know what kind of treatments and care you do and do not want at the end of your life is important. It is also important to begin these conversations early and to write down your wishes throughout your lifetime. However, if you are seriously ill and have been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, there is a special form called the POLST.

What is the POLST? The POLST is a form for people with a life-limiting illness that is signed by their provider. The POLST states the individual's preferences related to specific medical treatments toward the end of life.

What does POLST stand for? POLST stands for Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment.

Who completes the POLST form? The form is completed by you and your provider*. For the form to be valid, it must be signed by your provider. The signature of the patient or healthcare agent is strongly encouraged.

What does Life-Sustaining Treatment mean? Life-sustaining treatments replace or support failing bodily function. Medical providers are required to try life-sustaining treatments if there is not a medical order that states your wishes, like the POLST, in place.

*POLST "Providers"

For the purposes of the POLST, in Minnesota "Provider" refers to your physician, an advanced practice nurse, or a physician assistant.



Who should have a POLST form? Deciding to have a POLST form is your choice, but anyone diagnosed with a life-limiting illness can benefit. For example, individuals receiving hospice care, living in nursing homes, or using home care agencies should ask their provider about completing a POLST.

Why should I have POLST? A POLST form allows you to express your preferences and wishes about life-sustaining treatment. This is important because it encourages you to consider treatments and the impact they may have on your quality and quantity of life. Making sure your loved ones and healthcare providers know what you want can help reduce your family's potential anxiety and suffering.

Can I change my wishes on the POLST form? Yes. You can change or void the POLST at any time by asking your provider to fill out a new form with different instructions.

POLST vs. Health Care Directive

The POLST compliments, but does not replace a health care directive. If you have a serious illness, you should consider having both.

	POLST	Health Care Directive
What is it?	Medical Order	Personal roadmap; statement of patient wishes
Where do I start?	Conversation between you and your provider	Conversation between the individual and family/loved ones
Who is it for?	Seriously ill with life-limiting illness	Anyone age 18 or over
When does it go into effect?	Once signed, it is effective immediately regardless of decision-making capacity	Active only once patient has lost decision-making capacity

Contact MNHPC

Call (651) 917-4616 or visit www.mnhpc.org if you need additional assistance in locating providers or if you have general questions about the POLST for you or your loved ones.