POLST: Assuring Your Wishes are Honored

A Program of OHSU’s Center for Ethics in Health Care
Oregon POLST Form

Portable Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment

The current 2023 form is Oregon’s 14th version.
Do I need a new 2023 POLST, if I already have one?

Maybe.

However, pre-existing POLST forms remain valid as long as a patient’s wishes have not changed.

A new POLST using the revised 2023 form does not need to be completed to duplicate existing orders.
POLST: When is the right time?

More information can be found at: oregonpolst.org/patients-family
Learn more about POLST with videos & easy to read factsheets
Visit: oregonpolst.org/patients-family

Understanding POLST

POLST Can Help You and Your Loved Ones

What is a POLST form?
POLST stands for Portable Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment.
It turns your wishes for medical treatment into medical orders when you are very sick.

Some people want to be on life support machines in the hospital. Other people want to stay home with family when they are very sick. The choice is yours.

911 and emergency staff will follow these orders in an emergency.

What does a POLST do?

- It states the types of treatments you want or do not want when you are very sick or frail.
- It gives you more say over the medical treatment you get in an emergency.
- It guides medical treatment if you cannot say what treatments you want.

Who needs a POLST?

A POLST is for a person who is sick with a serious illness like advanced heart disease or when cancer has spread.

It is also for a person who is older and frail who might not want all types of treatment. It can be for a person who does not want to go to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or be on life support machines.

A doctor can help you know if you should have a POLST.

A POLST is not for an unexpected event like a car accident.

It is for when something happens to you because you are already very sick. For instance, if you were to stop breathing because of your illness.
## Differences between Advance Directive & POLST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advance Directive</th>
<th>POLST (Portable Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is it for?</strong></td>
<td>Everyone 18 and older.</td>
<td>People with a serious illness or who are very old and frail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What kind of document is it?</strong></td>
<td>It is a legal document.</td>
<td>It is a medical order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who signs it?</strong></td>
<td>You fill it out and sign it. Also, your health care representative signs it and witnesses or a Notary.</td>
<td>Your doctor* fills it out with your input. Then signs it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do I need a lawyer?</strong></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who keeps the form?</strong></td>
<td>You keep the original where loved ones can find it. You give a copy to your health care representative and your doctor.</td>
<td>Your doctor’s office keeps it and enters it into the electronic Oregon POLST Registry. They give you a copy that you post at home in a visible place like the fridge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can I change the form if I change my mind?</strong></td>
<td>Yes. You can tear up the old one. Then write a new one where loved ones can find it. You give a copy to your health care representative and your doctor.</td>
<td>Yes. You can ask for an appointment with your doctor to change it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What if there is a medical emergency and I cannot speak for myself?</strong></td>
<td>Your health care representative speaks for you and honors your wishes.</td>
<td>The ambulance staff, hospital staff and doctors look for the medical orders in the electronic data base and follow them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Doctor means anyone who can sign a POLST form (MD, DO, NP, PA, ND).*
Who should have a POLST?

POLST is appropriate for patients:
• Who have a serious illness such as advanced heart disease
• Who are older and frail and may not want to go to the intensive care unit

POLST is not appropriate for healthy individuals
How do I get a POLST?

POLST is the result of a conversation with your health care professional.
After my POLST is completed, What’s next?

Your health care team sends your POLST to the Oregon POLST Registry and You keep the original
The Oregon POLST Registry

- Immediate/24-hour access to POLST orders
- Provides Registry ID magnet and stickers for patients
How does POLST work?

- Keep your POLST form where it can be found and notify your family & caregivers about it.
- Put your registry magnet on the refrigerator.
- Put your registry stickers on your cane, walker, wheelchair or on another visible item you use.
What if I change my mind?

POLST forms can be changed or revoked at any time.

• Tell your health care professional and the Registry that you have changed your mind.

• Your POLST orders need to be changed to reflect your current wishes!
Key points to remember

POLST:

• Voluntary medical order signed by a health care professional

• For those with a serious illness or who are older and frail and may or may not want all treatments

• Based on your current state of health to turn wishes into actions

• Registered with the Oregon POLST Registry unless you opt-out
Key points to remember

Advance directive:

- Voluntary legal form signed by you
- For all adults (18 and older) regardless of health status
- Provides basic instructions for future care and allows you to appoint a health care representative
- It is up to you to make sure it is available when needed
Have Questions?

Visit the Oregon POLST Program website:

oregonpolst.org

Or call: (503) 494-3965

Email: polst@ohsu.edu

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