

SENIOR INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

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The POLST (Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) Form

What is the POLST form?

The POLST form is a way to summarize the wishes of an individual regarding life-sustaining treatment. These wishes may have already been stated in a document such as a Healthcare Directive or Durable Power of Attorney for Health care. Though it is not necessary to have these documents, it is recommended. The form is intended for anyone with an advanced life-limiting illness.

Why is the POLST form needed?

The POLST form takes the expressed wishes of the patient and records them as a set of physician's orders, which should be followed by health care providers and emergency responders in a variety of care settings. The document is transferable from one setting to another in a uniform document, and becomes a part of the clinical record.

How is the form used?

In addition to being part of the medical record in a health care facility, the POLST form must be honored by emergency personnel as orders to be followed. The form should be kept in a prominent location (such as on the refrigerator door, or the back of the bedroom door) to allow for quick access.

How is the form transferred from one setting to another?

The original green form stays with the patient in order to be valid, whether the transfer is to another facility or to return home, though the institution might want to keep a copy of the original form on file after discharge.

How can you get a form?

Forms are available from your physician. If your physician is not aware of the form or has any questions, information and forms are available by calling WSMA at 1-800-552-0612 or online at www.wsma.org.

Information obtained from Washington State Medical Association.