

# POLST

## *Provider Orders for Life-sustaining Treatment*

### **What is a POLST?**

POLST stands for “provider orders for life-sustaining treatment.” Your doctor uses POLST to write medical orders indicating your health care wishes.

### **Who Should Have a POLST?**

A POLST is for anyone who:

- might die in the next 12 months
- has a serious illness
- cannot make decisions
- does not want CPR.

Your doctor can use the POLST form to document your wishes in a clearly written medical order.

One decision you can make is whether or not you want CPR if your heart or breathing stops. This is known as a “do not resuscitate” order.

### **Who Signs the POLST?**

The form must be signed by a doctor for it to be followed by other health care providers. Health care providers who work with your doctor or nurse practitioner can fill out the form.

### **Where do I Keep the POLST?**

- If you live at home: keep the original yellow POLST form on the refrigerator where emergency responders can find it.
- If you live in a long-term care facility: the POLST will be kept in your chart.

### **When and Where is the POLST Used?**

- If you have a medical crisis at home, emergency responders (paramedics, police or firefighters) will need to see the signed POLST. This is how they know your wishes, including if you do not want CPR.
- The POLST stays with you if you are transferred between care settings. This includes the hospital, home or a long-term care facility.
- If you are out in public and your heart and breathing stop, emergency responders will attempt to give you CPR.

### **Who Needs a Copy of My POLST?**

- Ask your health care provider if your POLST is in your electronic health record.
- If you have a health care directive: give a copy of your POLST to each of your health care agents.

### **Does the Law Require a POLST?**

You can choose if you want a POLST. It is intended to:

- help you and your doctor talk about and develop plans to reflect your wishes
- help doctors, nurses, health care facilities and emergency personnel to honor and carry out your wishes for life-sustaining treatment.

**(over)**

## What if My Loved One Can No Longer Communicate Wishes for Care?

Family members may be able to speak on behalf of a loved one. A doctor, nurse or social worker can complete the POLST based on family members' understanding of their loved one's wishes.

## When Can I Find a POLST Form?

- **Minnesota:** Go to [mnmed.org/polst](https://mnmed.org/polst)
- **Wisconsin:** Go to [polst.org/educational\\_resource/wisconsin-polst/](https://polst.org/educational_resource/wisconsin-polst/)

## Do I Need a Health Care Directive?

A health care directive is recommended even if you have a POLST form.

This document will list your health care agent(s) and your health care wishes, values and goals if you are unable to communicate during a health crisis.

To learn more:

- Go to [allinahealth.org/hcd](https://allinahealth.org/hcd) for a health care directive and guide for how to fill it out.
- Ask your health care provider if you have questions.