



POLST
ILLINOIS

Practitioner Orders for
Life-Sustaining Treatment

What is POLST?

- In Illinois - POLST stands for Practitioner Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment
- A POLST form must be signed by the person it is for or their legal decision maker and *a qualified health care practitioner*:
 - Physician
 - Advanced Practice Registered Nurse
 - Physician Assistant
- A POLST form is filled out only after talking with a doctor or another healthcare professional
 - Talk about your health and what is important to you
 - Talk about the choices you have if there is an emergency, and you can't make your own decisions
 - Put your treatment wishes on the form

Who should have a POLST discussion?

Most older people are too healthy to have a POLST form.

Many people who are in a nursing facility should consider discussing the POLST form with a healthcare professional.

A POLST discussion and opportunity to complete a form is recommended for:

- A person who is sick with a serious illness or is very frail
- Someone living with dementia who may lose the ability to make their own decisions

Decisions you discuss and record on a POLST

The decisions that can be found on the POLST form are:

1. If your heart is NOT beating, would you want the emergency team to try to start it again (this is called CPR - cardiopulmonary resuscitation)?
2. If your heart is beating but you are very sick and can't breathe well, would you want to go to the hospital and be put on a machine (called a ventilator) to help you with breathing?
3. If you get very sick and you already have a serious illness that will get worse even if you take medicine, do you want to be kept at home and be treated for pain and suffering, but not try to "get better"?
4. If you can't or don't want to eat food and drink water, do you want to be fed through a tube placed through your belly (long-term) or placed through your nose or vein (short term) or not receive artificial nutrition?

What else is important to know about POLST?

Filling out a POLST form is a choice.

- No provider or facility can insist that a person complete a POLST form
- A person can VOID or change a POLST form whenever they want

If you discuss POLST, it is a good idea to have a person you trust with you to help make sure you understand your options.

In Illinois, healthcare providers must do what a POLST form says by law.

If you do not have a POLST form, the emergency team will try to keep you alive with all treatments available.

When a person's health conditions change or they have a hospital stay, they should discuss the POLST form again with a healthcare professional.

What are the benefits of POLST?

- ✓ Helps make sure a person receives the treatment they want and avoids the treatments they don't want in a medical emergency or if their heart stops beating.
- ✓ Shares choices about treatment and gives clear instructions for family and facility staff or when transferring a person to and from the hospital.
- ✓ Allows LTC facility to contact 911 in a critical medical emergency without fear of resident receiving unwanted treatment.