

National POLST: COVID-19 Statement

COVID-19 is a threat to our society, with the frail and elderly nursing home population among those at high risk. National POLST encourages all nursing homes and providers that currently use or may want to use POLST to develop an approach that is easily operational, is broadly communicated so as to reduce stress and confusion, accommodates remote participation by agents/family, and identifies patients goals of care and helps avoid providing treatment that is inconsistent with those wishes.

For patients without POLST, National POLST recommends offering to discuss a POLST with patients who are appropriate. POLST is appropriate for patients who are considered to be at risk for a life-threatening clinical event because they have a serious life-limiting medical condition, which may include advanced frailty. Individual state programs may have more specific criteria that should be followed.

POLST is not intended for healthy adults, even in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, healthy individuals should be encouraged to complete advance directives. <https://polst.org/polst-and-advance-directives/>

Preferences to avoid treatment are especially helpful. Although it may not be possible to honor all preferences for treatments depending on available resources, it is important to document these preferences.

Reminders about POLST:

- **WHAT:** POLST a set of portable medical orders documenting a person's wishes for advanced medical care (or not), arrived at through a shared-decision making discussion with a provider. There are 16 names for POLST (MOLST, MOST, POST, etc.) so your state may use call it something else (see www.polst.org/map, bottom of the page). Read more: Overview of POLST.
- **WHO:** POLST is appropriate for patients who are considered to be at risk for a life-threatening clinical event because they have a serious life-limiting medical condition, which may include advanced frailty. [See here for additional information and examples](#). **NOTE:** Even if the resident falls within this definition, their medical condition or treatment preferences may be too complex for POLST. POLST forms are intended to help the majority of patients in this population.
- **HOW:** The patient and his/her health care professional discuss the patient's goals of care considering the current diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment options (including risks and benefits) and then make decisions about the patient's goal of treatment and what treatments he/she would want to receive right now if something happened. Conversation resources are available at www.polst.org/covid
- **OTHER IMPORTANT NOTES:**
 - POLST is always voluntary. Mandating completion violates patient self-determination, informed consent and principles of person and family-centered care.
 - In almost all states physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants may sign a POLST form. [See what applies in your state](#).