

# **Legacy Medical Group Training Module: The POLST Form and Registry**

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## What is the POLST form?

The **POLST** (*physician orders for life sustaining therapy*) **form** is a medical order from a Physician, Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant to EMTs, Nurses, Physicians and other health care personnel. It is designed to communicate the wishes of a patient in a medical emergency, and emergency medical personnel are to follow the orders on the POLST unless there is concern that they do not reflect the current wishes of the patient.

In the medical community and ER, the POLST form is the accepted method to communicate/order DNR and prevent invasive care that a patient has decided would not be beneficial for them. Upon entering the hospital, the POLST should be reviewed, but the admitting physician should also discuss current patient wishes and fill out the Resuscitation Status Form.

**Note:** If the POLST form says DNR, and a family member or close contact says that the POLST is incorrect and the patient would want treatment, it is the recommendation of the POLST task force and Legacy policy to provide life sustaining therapy, including CPR, until the patient's wishes are clarified.

## What is the POLST registry?

There is a new Oregon POLST registry, located at OHSU. The registry gives emergency personnel access to POLST forms within minutes. All newly-created POLST forms are to be sent to the registry. **In fact, the state has MANDATED Oregon physicians, or their designee, to send newly-created forms to the registry unless the patient declines.** We are not required to send existing forms. All Legacy hospitals and clinics have a system in place to help with the submission of the new POLST forms.

The POLST registry will supply EMTs, ERs and registered ICUs with a copy of the most recent POLST within 1-2 minutes. Hospital units and clinics will be able to get non-urgent, usually same day, information from the POLST registry. If a hospital unit needs an urgent POLST, they would need to work with the ER or a registered ICU.

## Who should get a POLST form?

1. Patients with life-threatening illnesses or chronic medical conditions who have decided that they want to limit their medical care in an emergency; i.e., patients who desire DNR or no intubation.
2. Patients whose medical condition or wishes for life-sustaining therapy have changed such that their current POLST is incorrect.
3. It is Legacy policy that a POLST be completed by the discharging physician when a patient is being discharged to a SNF or ICF nursing home. This policy is meant to clarify treatment goals during this transition of care.
4. Any patient that desires to fill out a POLST form may do so.

## What must happen to make the POLST form registry-ready?

1. The demographic section must be completely filled out with the requested information: name, address, birthdate, last four digits of social security number, and sex of the patient.
2. Sign and date the form; *omitting the date is the most common error making a form invalid.*
3. Discuss the registry with the patient, and preferably have them sign the form on the back.
4. Check the opt-out box if the patient does not want their POLST sent to the registry.
5. Put the patient's name on the back of the form in the upper right corner.
6. Only Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, or Physician Assistants with an Oregon medical license may submit POLST forms to the registry.
7. *All Oregon Legacy clinics and hospitals have the updated, registry-ready POLST forms.*

**Note:** When filling out the form, **DO NOT** put a Legacy sticker in the demographic box as it does not contain the essential information needed for the registry.

## What must happen to submit the POLST form to the registry?

1. In a Legacy hospital: write an order to copy **both sides** of the POLST for the chart. Health Information Services will automatically fax the POLST to the registry. You do not need to write an order to submit the POLST to the registry.
2. In a Legacy clinic: write an order to copy and fax **both sides** of the POLST to the registry. Each clinic has a designated person to fax the forms. The registry submission number is on the back of the POLST form.

## How do I get information from the POLST registry?

1. Legacy ERs and registered ICUs have the number for emergency, 1-2 minute, POLST information.
2. The units and clinics should have the numbers for non-urgent, usually same day, POLST information. (Those numbers are: 503.418.4083, or toll free 877.367.7657.)
3. The POLST registry website (*see link below*) has the information about submission and forms for ICUs to register to get urgent information.

## Additional Information

For more information about the Oregon POLST program, visit the OHSU POLST website: <http://www.ohsu.edu/polst/programs/oregon-details.htm>