

Advance Care Planning: Advance Directives vs. POLST Forms

Key Differences Between Advance Directives and POLST forms

	POLST Form	Advance Directive
Type of Document	Medical Order.	Legal Document.
Who Completes	Health Care Professional (who can sign varies by state: https://polst.org/state-signature-requirements-pdf)	Individual.
Who Needs One	Any patients 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.	All competent adults.
Is Completion Voluntary?	Yes.	Yes.
Appoints a Surrogate	No.	Yes.
Can Patient's Surrogate Complete, Change or Void?	In most states, yes.	No.
What is Communicated	Specific medical orders.	General wishes about treatment wishes.
Can Emergency Personnel Follow	Yes.	No.
Ease in locating	Should be easy. Patient has original. Copy is in medical record. Copy may be in a registry (if state has a registry).	May be difficult. Depends on where individual keeps it and if they have told someone where it is, given a copy to surrogate, or to health care professional to put in his/her medical record.
Periodic Review	Health care professional is responsible for reviewing with patient or surrogate upon: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transfer to a new facility; • when there is a substantial change in patient's medical condition; or • when patient's goals of care or treatment preferences change. 	Up to the individual about how often it is reviewed and/or updated.