1-2019

Handout: Everyone Needs an Advance Directive! Not Everyone Needs a POLST!

Northwest Life Passages Coalition

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Everyone needs an Advance Directive!
Not everyone needs a POLST!
The **Advance Directive** and **Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatments (POLST)** are both important tools for documenting your wishes for care.

They are each designed to accomplish specific goals - it is important to understand who they are intended for and what they do!

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Advance Directive always has two parts*:</td>
<td>POLST is a portable medical order that takes effect as soon as it is signed!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Healthcare Directive, also known as Directive to Physicians.</td>
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<td>*Many have a third part, a “Values Section”, where you can outline your priorities for guiding decisions.</td>
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**Essential Facts about Advance Directives:**
1) Names your Health Care Power of Attorney - the person who can speak for you anytime you cannot speak for yourself in a medical situation - **POLST does NOT allow for this.**
2) Outlines your wishes for care at the end-of-life when you are seriously ill - It can describe your “line in the sand”.
3) The healthcare directive takes effect when you are deemed terminally or irreversibly ill by two physicians.
   - As a legal document, it guides medical decisions made by your doctors and health care team.
   - As a legal document, it cannot be “followed” as a medical order by emergency medical personnel.
   - There are many versions of the Advance Directive.
   - **Everyone 18 years and older needs an Advance Directive.**

**Essential Facts about POLST:**
1) POLST is intended for people with serious illness and/or the medically frail at any age.
2) POLST must be a signed by a physician, PA-C or ARNP to be valid.
   As a medical order, it can be quickly understood by all healthcare professionals, including first responders and emergency medical personnel.
3) POLST is a portable medical order; it is transferable to all healthcare settings. It remains valid as you transition from home into a medical setting, and back… to your home or other care setting, such as skilled nursing facility or long-term care home.
   - This form contains medical orders that specify the type of care you would like in the event of a medical emergency
   - **As medical orders, POLST can be followed by emergency medical personnel.**
   - Versions of POLST exist in many states; they vary slightly but may be honored across state lines in some instances.

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# Advance Directive vs. POLST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DETAILS</th>
<th>Advance Directive:</th>
<th>POLST:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Express wishes for future end of life care and appoints a health care power of attorney(s)</td>
<td>Portable Medical Order which turns a patient’s wishes to action in a medical emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Needs It?</td>
<td>All Adults 18+ of sound mind</td>
<td>Seriously Ill or medically frail at any age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment Focus</td>
<td>In the future, if you cannot speak for yourself, if you are deemed ill enough</td>
<td>Right now – based on your current medical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed by?</td>
<td>Individual (you)</td>
<td>Doctor or Advance Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) AND individual (you) OR legally authorized representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appoints Healthcare Agent?</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guides Emergency Room Decisions?</td>
<td>YES, with discretion of physician</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed “in the field” by EMS?</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
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</table>

More information on both documents is available on the following websites:

- [https://www.peacehealth.org/advance-care-planning](https://www.peacehealth.org/advance-care-planning)

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