

## Patient and Family Caregiver Frequently Asked Questions

### Who should have a POST form?

The POST form is for **seriously ill** people with:

- terminal conditions,
- advanced chronic progressive illness or frailty, or
- a condition that CPR probably would not help.

The POST form is **NOT** for people with:

- *early stages* of a progressive illness;
- a disability who still have many years of life expectancy; or
- good health.

### Do I *have to* have a POST form?

No. You do not *have to* have a POST form. But if you are seriously ill, it is a good idea. The POST form lets your health care team know your wishes about what kinds of medical treatment you want (and don't want) at the end of your life.

You may want to complete a POST form if:

- You are being discharged from the hospital to a nursing home or your own home with hospice or home health care, or
- You live in a nursing home.

### Is a POST form the same as an *Advance Directive*?

No, it is not the same. A POST form is only for people who are near the end of life. *All* adults are advised to have an **advance directive**. An advance directive is a form you fill out to say what kinds of treatments you do and do not want in the future. It is also a place where you can also name a **health care representative**. This person is legally appointed to speak for you when you cannot speak for yourself.

The Indiana **POST** is recommended for patients who are seriously ill and expected to die within a year. Because the POST form lists medical orders, it is the best form to use to get the kind of treatment you want.

### Should I fill out an advance directive *AND* a POST form?

Maybe. If you have an advanced chronic progressive illness, advanced frailty, or terminal conditions, you may want to complete both an advance directive and POST. That makes it more likely to have your end-of-life treatment preferences known and followed.

It also helps if you discuss your preferences for end-of-life treatment with your health care representative.

### Does a health care professional need to sign my POST form?

Yes. The POST form is a medical order. A licensed doctor, advanced practice nurse, or physician assistant **MUST** read and sign it.

### What should I do if my health care provider does not want to sign my POST form?

Health care providers who do not know the patient very well or are not familiar with the POST form may not want to sign the POST form.

You have other options you can explore.

You or your health care representative should:

- Ask another treating doctor, nurse, or physician assistant to sign your POST form;
- Transfer to a different health care provider who is willing to sign your POST form; or
- Have another health care professional talk with your provider about the legal protections POST provides for the providers, patients, health care representatives, and the health care facility.

### Can a health care professional fill out a POST form for me?

Yes. Your health care provider can appoint someone to help you or your health care representative fill out the POST form. This person can be a:

- social worker,
- nurse,
- chaplain, or
- other health care professional.

They **must** also sign on the back of the POST form, where indicated.

A doctor, nurse or physician assistant **MUST** still read and sign the form to make sure the orders are reasonable and medically appropriate.

### Can a POST form be filled out or canceled without telling me or my representative?

**No.** The purpose of the POST form is to make sure *your* end-of-life wishes are followed. It should not be filled out, changed, or canceled without your or your health care representative's participation.

### How often should my POST form be reviewed?

You (or your health care representative) and your health care team should review your POST whenever:

- You transfer from one health care facility to another, or
- Your medical condition changes.

### Can I change my mind about the decisions I made on my POST form?

**Yes.** You can change the decisions and preferences on your POST at any time.

Your health care representative can also cancel your POST if she or he believes you do not have the ability to make decisions.

To cancel your POST, you or your representative have these options:

- write down your new wishes, then sign and date them;
- destroy the old POST form; or
- just say you want to cancel the current POST.

### When does my new POST take effect?

Your POST changes take effect as soon as you or your representative

- tell your health care provider about the changes, or
- give a new written POST to your health care provider.

## Can my health care representative make changes to my POST?

Yes. Your health care representative can change your POST. But your representative must only do this if she or he knows or believes the changes are what you would have wanted. If your wishes are not known, the representative should work with the health care team to figure out what is in your best interest. This means they will make a decision about what will be most likely to give you a good quality of life.

## Should my POST affect health care decisions about day-to-day treatment?

Yes. For example, POST forms can guide decisions about:

- medications
- hospitalization
- feeding tubes,
- antibiotics to treat pneumonia, and
- other treatments.

The POST form is not only about CPR.

## Do health care providers *have to* follow my wishes on the POST form?

**Yes.** Health care providers **MUST** follow the most current POST that is available to them.

*Exceptions:* Health care providers do NOT have to follow a POST if they believe:

- the POST form is not legally valid;
- you or your health care representative canceled the POST;
- you or your health care representative asked for an alternative treatment;
- it would not be medically appropriate to comply with the request on your POST form; or
- they have a religious or moral conflict with your POST orders. If this happens, they **MUST** transfer you to another health care provider who can carry out the POST orders. If this is not possible, see the [Indiana POST Act](#) about what to do.

## Where should I keep my original POST form?

The POST form is an important legal document. The original, signed copy belongs to you.

### Where to keep your POST:

#### *If you live at home...*

Keep your POST form with your medications or on the refrigerator. Make sure family members and caregivers know where it is.

#### *If you live in a health care facility...*

Your POST should be the first page in your medical record, unless your facility has a different procedures.

#### *If you are in a nursing home...*

Your nursing home may keep your original POST if you transfer to a hospital. If so, they will send a copy of your POST with you.

## Can someone with significant physical and/or developmental disabilities use a POST?

Maybe. The POST form is for someone near the end of life.

A person with disabilities and one of these conditions, **should** have a POST:

- advanced chronic progressive illness or frailty,
- a terminal condition, or
- a condition that CPR probably would not help.

If the person with disabilities is medically stable, they **should NOT** have a POST.

## What are examples of when someone with a severe disability *should* have a POST form?

A person with a disability should have a POST if they:

- have a terminal disease,
- show a significant decline in health (like frequent aspiration pneumonia),
- are in hospice or a palliative care program, or
- have a worsening health condition that severely affects their functioning, and that intervention will not change.

## Who can complete a POST?

You can complete a POST with your health care provider.

A legal guardian or health care representative may complete a POST for someone who does not have the capacity to make decisions on their own.

A family member can only complete a POST If they are the legal guardian or health care representative.

*Note:* Do not assume that someone with a disability cannot make decisions.

## Is a photocopy of a POST also valid?

**Yes.** Photocopies, faxes, and black and white originals are legally valid.

## Why is the POST usually on bright pink paper?

Pink paper makes the form easy to see and quickly found in an emergency. This is also part of the national guidelines. The POST does not *have to* be on pink paper, but organizations are encouraged to print it on bright pink paper.

## Are POST forms from other states valid in Indiana?

**Yes.** Forms that are very similar to Indiana's POST form are valid in Indiana, and may be honored.

The form **MUST** be:

- the other state's *official* form (visit [www.polst.org](http://www.polst.org)),
- signed by a doctor, nurse, or physician assistant,
- signed by the patient or the patient's health care representative, and
- in English.

## Is Indiana's POST form valid in other states?

It depends on the state. Many states prefer to use their own form. It is best to get a form from a health care provider in the state where you may want care.

For more information, visit [www.polst.org](http://www.polst.org), and check with the other state's program.

## Does the POST form have to be in English?

Yes, the POST form must be in English. This helps ensure that emergency medical responders and health care providers know what it says. There are translations of the POST form into several other languages at [www.indianapost.org](http://www.indianapost.org) .