

The POST Program

Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment

When patients nearing the end of life cannot speak for themselves, POST lets health care providers know exactly what treatments a patient does and does not want to receive. Unlike a living will, the POST form contains medical orders that are immediately actionable by all health care providers, including emergency medical personnel. The POST also travels with patients throughout the healthcare system to ensure their wishes are known and honored, regardless of the setting.

What is POST?

- ❖ The POST form is a medical order form that documents a patient's treatment preference as medical orders that can be easily understood and enacted by health care providers.
- ❖ The POST form documents patients' preferences about a range of treatment options, including resuscitation, intubation, hospitalization, antibiotics, and feeding tubes.
- ❖ Similar programs are used in 15 states and the POST has been identified as a preferred practice by the National Quality Forum.
- ❖ Research suggests that POST is effective at ensuring patient treatment preferences are honored.

Advance directives like an Indiana Living Will are important, but they are not enough. **The Indiana POST Program fills a serious gap:**

	Indiana Living Will	Out-of-Hospital DNR	POST
Allows <u>all</u> adults to document general preferences for end of life care?	YES	NO	NO
Physician orders to be followed outside an acute care hospital?	NO	YES	YES
Can be honored by emergency medical personnel?	NO	YES	YES
Available for patients with a terminal condition?	YES	YES	YES
Available for patients with advanced chronic progressive illness or frailty syndrome?	YES	NO	YES
Requires a physician's signature?	NO	YES	YES
Allows patients to express their preferences for a range of specific treatment options?	NO	NO	YES
Patient wishes can be understood without interpretation?	NO	YES	YES
Requires a discussion between the patient and his or her physician about treatment options?	NO	NO	YES
Reduces or eliminates the burden on family members to make treatment decisions on behalf of the patient?	NO	NO	YES

When and how should a POST form take effect?

- ❖ It is important to understand the difference between a living will and POST. The living will gives healthy adults an opportunity to express their wishes should a catastrophic illness or injury occur. The POST allows a person with an advanced illness or condition to determine the level of care they will receive as their disease/condition progresses.
- ❖ The POST form allows patients with advanced chronic progressive disease, advanced frailty, or terminal conditions to express their wishes. Completion of a POST form is highly recommended for hospitalized patients being discharged to nursing homes or to their own home with hospice or home health care. Completion of POST forms is also recommended for nursing home residents either at the time of admission to the nursing home or during quarterly care planning. However, use of a POST form is always voluntary.
- ❖ The POST form takes effect only after the patient's physician reviews and signs the form. Physicians, nurses, social workers, or other designated health care professionals fill out the POST form based on a meaningful discussion with the patient or the patient's health care representative.
- ❖ If a patient's condition changes, it is appropriate to reconsider the treatment plan. The POST form can always be voided and another form executed with different orders. Otherwise, the POST form remains in effect and should be followed unless there is a different request by the patient or, when appropriate, the patient's representative.

How is a POST form used?

- ❖ The POST form may be used to guide daily care decisions. Because the POST form documents patients' preferences for a variety of interventions, it can be used to guide decisions such as the placement of feeding tubes, the use of antibiotics, and the provision of other treatments.
 - ❖ The POST form travels with the patient to all settings, including home, hospitals, nursing facilities, pre-hospital EMS, and other health care settings. When a patient is being transferred, the original form is sent with the patient to the receiving facility. The POST form remains in effect at the receiving facility, and should be honored by all providers across the state.
 - ❖ At home, patients keep the POST form with their medications or on the refrigerator where emergency responders can find it.
 - ❖ For patients who reside in a long-term care facility, the POST form is generally kept as the first page in a person's medical record.
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