

Summary of Changes in the use of POLST forms in New Hampshire

The first is that New Hampshire has joined the growing movement of states which have adopted a common national form to replace its state form.

The second is that the law has been changed to establish POLST forms as a recognized means of expressing a “portable” Do Not Resuscitate Order, to be recognized across medical and emergency response systems.

History

From its inception, the POLST paradigm has been an evolving, learning movement. Its purpose is to engage patients with known progressive illness or fragility in actively considering care pathways and goals and expressing them in ways quickly recognizable by all points of contact in medical systems. As physician/APRN/PA orders, the forms are actionable in healthcare settings and reflect the preference and informed consent/direction of the patient.

Practice experience has taught us that state borders have proved to be an impediment to patient preferences being honored. As a result, a national form, with input from all states, was crafted, and adopted by the National POLST office. The intent is to make the order set universally recognizable and familiar. While the form New Hampshire has been using has been generally effective, and the changes the new version make are small, the benefit of adopting a “universal” form is clear.

How will this affect your work with POLST?

Several points to consider:

- Prior forms will still be valid and do need not to be replaced.
- Subsequent orders to the Foundation for Healthy Communities will be fulfilled with the new national version. As always, this will be done at a cost commensurate with our printing expenses
- The Foundation will release these forms only to providers (or researchers). We do this to prevent consumer error, as a form completed by a consumer with no authorizing provider signature, is **NOT VALID** or actionable, and will result in interventions the consumer may have thought were disallowed. This caution is a national standard, and we urge you to consider it in your own practice.
- Several of our neighboring states have or are actively moving toward adopting the common national form.
- Each state may continue to have its own version of the national form, using either a state logo or the national logo, and many states retain their own title, such as MOLST, or COLST for this set of orders. All are required to be printed on durable stock in striking color; most use pink, but since pink was already taken by New Hampshire’s portable DNR form, we use yellow. All are now valid in New Hampshire.
- Portable DNR forms will continue to be used in New Hampshire. A POLST form contains a DNR order, which, if elected by the consumer, is valid, portable, and actionable in New Hampshire. It is not necessary to use both.
- The law requires providers signing POLST or DNR forms in New Hampshire to be licensed in this state; however, it also allows and directs providers and responders here to honor forms from outside of New Hampshire, if they are valid in another state.