HOW IS POLST DIFFERENT FROM AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

POLST complements an Advance Directive and does not totally replace that document. You may still need an advance directive to appoint a legal healthcare administrator. It is recommended that all adults have an advance directive regardless of their health status. If there is a conflict between the documents, have a conversation with your practitioner as soon as possible to determine the most current preferences.

The promise of POLST is that it empowers you to make the important decisions about your end-of-life care. Have the POLST conversation with your medical professional.
You should have a POLST form if you are:

- Seriously ill with a life-limiting advanced illness
- Frail and weak and have trouble performing routine daily activities
- Afraid of losing the capacity to make your own healthcare decisions in the near future
- Living in a nursing home or hospice.

Goals of Care

This section details how you want to live your life in the time you have left. What is most important to you as you deal with a life-limiting illness? Do you have personal goals or family milestones you would like to reach? How much do you want to know about your illness? How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes? These are all issues you should consider. Your POLST form will allow you to make known any personal, cultural or spiritual practices related to your care.

Medical Interventions

The form also will allow you to work with your medical professional to clearly define the types of medical interventions you want – or don’t want. For example, you may specify that you want comfort measures only, which is medical treatment intended to eliminate pain and suffering. You may specify an array of other treatment options such as intravenous fluids or antibiotics. Or you may state your wishes for full treatment, including all options available to sustain your life which could include a feeding tube and cardio pulmonary resuscitation.