



Catholic Conference
of Illinois

65 E. Wacker Place
Suite 1620
Chicago, IL 60601
Ph. 312-368-1066
Fx. 312-368-1090

108 E. Cook St.
Springfield, IL 62704
Ph. 217-528-9200
Fx. 217-528-7214

www.ilcatholic.org
Diocese of Belleville
Archdiocese of Chicago
Diocese of Joliet
Diocese of Peoria
Diocese of Rockford
Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

What is Illinois POLST? Illinois POLST stands for Illinois Practitioner Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment. Illinois POLST is a document designed to facilitate a discussion between a person with advanced or serious illness or frailty and his or her physician about the person's prognosis and healthcare options so that together, they can design a care plan that is most suitable for the individual's medical condition and goals of care. Illinois POLST is an advance directive (a document that identifies a person's healthcare wishes prior to a life-threatening emergency) as well as a physician order, which means that it protects a person's wishes in all settings (i.e. hospital, home, nursing home.)

Is it acceptable for a Catholic to have an Illinois POLST advance directive? Yes. Seriously ill Catholics are encouraged to participate actively in decisions about their own healthcare decisions. An individualized, well-crafted Illinois POLST can provide clear and specific clinical direction based on prior conversations in cases of an emergency where circumstances make conversation impossible.

Is Illinois POLST the same as POLST forms in other states? No. Each state has its own form. In Illinois, the Illinois Catholic Health Association, the Catholic Conference of Illinois, Catholic healthcare ethicists, and the Illinois Bishops' Vicars have been involved in the creation of the Illinois POLST form. Illinois POLST was designed to rectify some of the moral challenges posed by POLST forms in other states.

Who could benefit from having an Illinois POLST document? Illinois POLST was designed for seriously ill people who have a life expectancy of one year or less. Persons who are seriously ill from a life-limiting condition, who have advanced frailty, or who are at risk of losing the capacity to make their own healthcare decisions within the next year may benefit from having an Illinois POLST.

If I have an Illinois POLST document, should I still have a Power of Attorney for Healthcare? Yes. A Power of Attorney for Healthcare is a document in which you name someone to speak on your behalf for healthcare decisions in the event that you are unable to do so yourself. All adults with the capacity to make decisions are encouraged to have a Power of Attorney for Health Care.

What kinds of treatments does Illinois POLST address? Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Emergency Medical Treatment (including mechanical ventilation and transfers to the hospital), Artificially Administered Nutrition and Hydration, Documentation of the Discussion, and Other Advance Directives.

What does the Catholic Church think about the use of life-sustaining treatment? The Catholic Church affirms the dignity of earthly life and teaches that we are ultimately created for life with God in heaven. The Church advises that a person should use those means of preserving life that are not too burdensome for him or her and offer a reasonable hope of benefit. At the same time, the Church teaches that a person may legitimately forgo means of preserving life that he or she judges it to be too burdensome or insufficiently beneficial. Nutrition and hydration should not be withheld or withdrawn with the purpose of causing death, but certain means of providing nutrition and hydration may become excessively burdensome or insufficiently beneficial, and therefore, not required, when someone is at the end stages of life.

Are there any guides available for decision-making about life sustaining treatment from a Catholic perspective? Yes. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, Part V on Issues in Care for the Seriously Ill and Dying is a helpful summary. It is available free of charge at: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/health-care/upload/Ethical-Religious-Directives-Catholic-Health-Care-Services-fifth-edition-2009.pdf>

If I would like more information about creating an Illinois POLST form, what should I do? If you are interested in considering an Illinois POLST form for yourself, speak with your physician. If you have any moral concerns about the Illinois POLST form, as it concerns you or a loved one, please contact your parish priest.