

Other Important Documents

POLST or Physician Order for Life Sustaining Treatment: A POLST form tells the doctor the wishes of an individual regarding end-of-life care. A POLST form is intended for those that are seriously ill or frail. It gives specific medical orders for treatment wishes during a medical emergency.

Unlike a Living Will or Directive to Physicians, a POLST form is signed by the individual AND their doctor. If the person you are caring for is unable to sign a POLST form, their agent under a Power of Attorney or their Guardian can sign on their behalf. POLST forms are available from doctors, hospitals, and hospices.

This form is printed on a bright pink paper. Providers ensure that the POLST form travels with the patient whenever and wherever they may be transferred, whether to another facility or home. If you are caring for someone who has recently filled out a POLST form, remember to bring this form with you if you need to take the person you are caring for to the hospital.

Living Will: A living will is a legal document that outlines an individual's treatment wishes. A living will is not a medical order and cannot tell EMTs or hospitals what to do. The Living Will helps guide treatment plans, in non-emergency situations, for example, when someone is in a skilled nursing facility. This helps to direct future decisions about medical treatment.

This legal document lets health care professionals know generally what types of treatment the patient may or may not want during some unknown medical crisis.

These forms are available at most hospitals. Two witnesses are required to sign a living will.

Wills and Trusts: Wills and Trusts designate someone to manage an individual's estate after they are deceased and direct distribution of their assets after their death. Wills are probated (approved by the court as valid). A Living Trust, also known as a Family Trust, Revocable Trust, Irrevocable Trust, or Inter Vivos Trust, distributes your assets without probate but is more complex and expensive than a Will. Trusts are not probated unless contested, done incorrectly, or assets are not held in the name of the Trust. To find out which is best for the person you are caring for, contact an elder law attorney or your local senior center for a legal aid attorney.