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### **What is POLST? Is it something new?**

Alaska Physician Order for Life-Sustaining Treatment (AK POLST) is a legal medical order indicating the patient's preferences for emergency and/or life-sustaining treatments when seriously ill or at the end-of-life. Alaska POLST is replacing the Alaska Comfort One program as of January 2022 after being signed into regulation May 2021.

### **Is POLST the same thing as a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) Order?**

A POLST notifies emergency personnel of a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order but also provides additional information that helps EMS determine what treatments the patient prefers. For example, rather than automatically going to the hospital, a POLST may help keep the patient comfortable where they are located, if that is the treatment level they have chosen.

### **Why do people need these forms? Can't they just die without filling out a form?**

Completing a POLST form is voluntary for the patient or legal medical decision-maker. POLST is intended for individuals with advanced illness, serious life-limiting medical conditions, or advanced frailty. You can "just die without filling out a form;" however, the additional section of POLST that defines the type of treatment that you prefer (full, selective, or comfort) beyond CPR is incredibly important.

### **Why should advanced practice registered nurses be able to sign these forms? Isn't this something a doctor should do?**

APRNs in Alaska practice independently, that is, without oversight from a doctor. Many Alaskans choose APRNs as their trusted healthcare provider, and these patients deserve the same level of care throughout their life with their chosen and trusted provider, including when they are living with serious illness.

### **Some sections of the bill already say that a registered nurse can declare death. Why should advance practice nurses be added?**

AS 08.68.700 allows a registered nurse to declare death, but only if a physician documents the anticipated reason for death. This is different than making such a declaration independently. A registered nurse may, under current statute, also sign a death certificate, but a physician must certify the death within 24 hours. The changes proposed in HB 392 allow an APRN to declare death and sign a death certificate independently, but also document the anticipated reason for death so a registered nurse can declare death, as well as certify a death within 24 hours if a registered nurse signs the certificate.

### **Do other states let advanced practice registered nurses sign DNR and POLST forms?**

Yes. 34 states + D.C. grant APRN Signature Authority for POLST and/or DNR.