

AHCD vs. POLST:

Essentials of Healthcare Planning

An Advanced Health Care Directive (AHCD) and a POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) are essential tools for healthcare planning. While both documents help communicate medical preferences, they serve different purposes and are used in specific contexts. Below is a summary of their significance and distinctions.



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Advanced Health Care Directive (AHCD)

PURPOSE:

- A legal document outlining an individual's long-term healthcare preferences.
- Allows appointment of a healthcare proxy to make decisions if the individual is incapacitated.

KEY FEATURES:

- Covers a wide range of scenarios, including:
 - Life-sustaining treatments.
 - Organ donation.
 - End-of-life care.
- Designed for all adults, regardless of health status.
- Focuses on future, unforeseen medical situations.

POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment)

PURPOSE:

- A medical order reflecting specific treatment preferences for individuals with serious illnesses or frailty.
- Guides healthcare professionals in emergencies.

KEY FEATURES:

- Includes detailed instructions on:
 - Resuscitation (e.g., CPR).
 - Intubation.
 - Artificial nutrition.
- Intended for immediate use.
- Must be completed and signed by a healthcare provider.



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Summary

While both documents express healthcare preferences, the AHCD is broader and future-oriented, whereas the POLST is specific and actionable in current medical situations. The AHCD is a legal directive, while the POLST is a medical order. Together, they ensure comprehensive care planning, aligning an individual's wishes with appropriate medical action.