



County of San Diego

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EMS MEDICAL DIRECTOR GUIDANCE FOR PHYSICIAN'S ORDER FOR LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENT (POLST) DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In light of the dynamic and rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, many established procedures in the medical community have been modified. EMS providers may encounter [POLST forms with a "verbal signature"](#) from a decisionmaker and/or the medical provider completing the form. In some cases the medical provider may attach documentation of the phone conversation regarding treatment decisions.

Under County EMS Policies [S-402](#) and [S-414](#), POLST forms are considered valid only with complete signatures. Verbal orders deemed valid by EMS providers may be substituted for a signature until June 1, 2020, subject to extension.

In addition, patients may instruct distinct treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic. These patient instructions may be indicated on the POLST form with "orders reflect patient's instruction during COVID-19" or similar notations.

I encourage EMS providers encountering POLST with documented verbal signatures applicable to immediate treatment decisions to:

1. Contact the Base Hospital team early;
2. Look for other supporting documentation, or;
3. Contact health care agents/attorneys in fact.

EMS providers that withhold or terminate CPR or other treatments because of a POLST with verbal signatures shall document as per S-414 III. D, with details regarding the circumstances, supporting documentation, or other situational elements. If speaking with a medical provider or health care agent, EMS providers shall confirm identification of the speaker and that person's knowledge of the patient. This conversation should be documented in the PCR.

Thank you for your assistance in continuing to provide outstanding care to our patients.

Sincerely,

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, FIFEM, FAEMS, Medical Director
Emergency Medical Services
County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency

cc: Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator
EMS Provider Agency Coordinators
Base Station Physicians