

# Electronic Documentation For “End of Life” Directive

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**Let’s be honest. Nobody wants to plan for the end of their life when they wake up in the morning.**

It’s the last thing many of us think about, and frankly, why should we? Talking about your death is depressing. Yet somehow, as depressing as this topic is, many get up the courage to get the affairs in order with an advance directive or living will.

Then we go about our lives, all but forgetting that piece of paper with the plan on it. We paid the lawyer to take care of it after all. One day, the unthinkable happens; you’re diagnosed with an incurable illness that is probably going to take your life.

At this point, a care plan is drafted and the might of the health system goes to work to cure you or at least try to give you some more time.

But as the difficult months drag on, it becomes increasingly clear that the treatments are not working and there is nothing more that can be done. At this point, it’s not a matter of how you’re going to die, just a matter of when.

After taking some time to come to the reality of what is happening, you go back to your doctor who asks about your care preferences. At last, something you have under your control because after all, you paid your lawyer to fill out your Advance Directive.

Unfortunately for many people, the story doesn’t end there. Advance Directives, while helpful, are not medical documents. Their legal power is generally reserved to designate a decision maker for you in the event that you cannot speak for yourself.

So if that decision maker is not reachable at 3am when the unthinkable happens, then the doctors do everything which means it is often too late to change course when they finally reach your decision maker.

By the time someone has reached a life expectancy of less than a year, it is time to talk to your doctor about a POLST form. POLST stands for Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment. Unlike Advance Directives, POLST forms represent a doctor’s orders and can be acted upon in an emergency to honor a patient’s wishes similar to informed consent.



POLST forms are signed by the patient and a physician. It tells your doctor, in medical terms, what you want done or not done. Unfortunately, paper POLST forms and Advance Directives sometimes contain errors and are often lost before they are needed. In addition, if you give a copy to your doctor in a clinic to add to your electronic medical record that does not always mean it will be shared with the emergency room at a different location.

Vynca’s objective is to make error free forms available at any location a person could receive emergency care. And to ensure that your choice of how to end your life can be honored.

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*Vynca is a software company that was born out of the Stanford program in Biodesign. Its mission is to complete, store and access POLST forms across the continuum of care. To learn more, go to [vynca.org](http://vynca.org). 918.688.4303.*