



June 21, 2011

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LaPOST Document to Aid in End-of-Life Care Planning

BATON ROUGE, La. – The LaPOST document, recently given final approval by the Louisiana Legislature, is now available as a physician resource when helping patients plan and state their end-of-life treatment preferences and goals of care.

LaPOST, which stands for Louisiana Physician Order for Scope of Treatment, specifies patients' wishes in the event they are unable to communicate. It is a physician order and is only recommended for patients with a life-limiting illness and a life expectancy of less than one year. Physicians and their patients must complete and sign the LaPOST document for it to be valid.

The document is one of several resources for end-of-life planning that can be downloaded through the LaPOST website, www.la-post.org. The resources are free and publicly available, and more are under development and being continually added.

In addition to information on completing the form, the LaPOST website includes policy examples on implementing LaPOST in a variety of medical settings, suggestions on discussing the issue with patients and recommendations for ensuring information in the document is accessible to all health care professionals treating the patient. The site also provides explanations of advance directives and health care power of attorney documents.

LaPOST was created as a best practice model for advance care planning through the efforts of the LaPOST Coalition, a statewide network of Louisiana health care professionals. It was recommended by the End-of-Life Work Group of the Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative and endorsed by the Louisiana State Medical Society.

Composed with input from health care and legal professionals, the document is completely voluntary and neither for nor against life-sustaining treatment. However, LaPOST is a medical order. Once completed, all health care professionals must comply with the specified treatment.

LaPOST Coalition Chairwoman Dr. Susan Nelson says a key benefit is that the document transfers with patients across health care settings – from a hospital to a nursing home to a hospice, for example.

“LaPOST was created to help Louisiana's health care system honor and support patients' end-of-life wishes,” says Nelson, medical director of senior services for the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System. “The resources available on the LaPOST website are meant to assist physicians in having this conversation with patients and their families and complete and implement the form. Health care professionals are encouraged to check our website for more information on end-of-life care that will be added in the coming months.”

The official form is printed on gold-colored paper for easy identification and includes a LaPOST watermark visible on originals as well as photocopies.

The LaPOST Coalition is organized through the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, a private nonprofit group focused on collaborative health care initiatives that benefit all Louisiana residents, including a standardized system for electronic medical records. In addition to health-information technology, LHCQF focuses on quality measurement, clinical quality improvement, medical homes, outreach and education. Board members are volunteers who represent a cross section of public and private insurance purchasers, patient advocates, providers, physicians and insurers throughout the state. More information is available at www.lhcqf.org.

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