

WHAT IS LaPOST?

LaPOST stands for Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment. It refers to a physician's order that documents and directs a patient's medical treatment preferences when faced with life-limiting illnesses and irreversible conditions. The form represents a model program for end-of-life care.

HOW DOES THE LaPOST DOCUMENT ENSURE THAT I WILL RECEIVE THE TYPE OF CARE I WANT?

The LaPOST document represents your wishes and goals of care. It is a physician's order that is readily available to other health care providers that may be involved in your care. The information in the LaPOST document is obtained from a conversation between you or your health care representative and your physician. Studies conducted in states that have similar documents available have revealed that among patients who have these documents, treatment preferences were honored 98 percent of the time, and no one received unwanted intubation, CPR, intensive care or feeding tubes. As a result, documents like the LaPOST form have helped to bridge the gap between what treatments you want and what you receive.

HOW DOES THE LaPOST DOCUMENT CONFORM TO MY SPECIFIC CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS?

Cultural and religious beliefs vary widely in regard to end-of-life care. There are a wide variety of resources available at www.la-post.org to help you determine if the LaPOST document is right for you, based on your personal beliefs. You are also encouraged to discuss the document with your clergy or religious or spiritual leaders.

DOES THE LaPOST DOCUMENT TRANSFER WITH ME ACROSS HEALTH CARE SETTINGS?

Yes. The document is designed to become part of your medical record. It transfers with you across health settings, from home to hospital to long-term care facility or hospice care. When you transfer to a new health setting, your original LaPOST document should accompany you. In addition, a copy of your LaPOST document should be kept in your medical record.

IS THE LaPOST FORM A LEGAL DOCUMENT?

Yes. The LaPOST program and document were approved by the Louisiana Legislature during the 2010 legislative session as Act 954 and revised during the 2016 legislative session.

IS A COPY OF THE LaPOST FORM VALID?

The LaPOST form can be copied. Photocopies and faxed copies of signed LaPOST documents are considered legal and valid. It is recommended that the copies be made on bright gold-colored paper whenever possible to ensure that the document is easily identified. The copy must include your most recent wishes. You are encouraged to keep copies of your LaPOST forms in your possession and to let your families and/or physicians know where the document is kept in case it is needed.

IS THE LaPOST DOCUMENT THE SAME AS AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE?

No. An advance directive, also known as a 'living will,' is a legal document that provides instructions specifying what types of treatment should be given to you when you become unable to make decisions or can no longer speak for yourself. It is restrictive, as it only goes into effect if you lose the ability to make decisions and are terminally ill. An advance directive can be very specific or very vague, and is usually completed in advance of any known illness. The LaPOST document, however, is used as part of the health care planning process and is complementary with advance directives. It may also be used in the absence of an advance directive. In addition, the LaPOST document is a physician's order that specifically outlines your medical treatment wishes and goals of care. As a physician's order, LaPOST must be honored by all health care professionals, and it can be used to translate your advance directive into a physician's order. Also, because the LaPOST document becomes part of your medical record, it travels with you across health care settings.

DO ALL PHYSICIANS HAVE TO HONOR MY LaPOST DOCUMENT?

Physicians should honor the orders stated in your LaPOST document immediately, but your physician is obliged to examine, assess and review the orders any time you transfer to a new health care setting, as your health status and goals of care may have changed. The physician may then issue new orders consistent with the most current information about your health status, medical condition, treatment preferences and goals of care. Any deviations from your original LaPOST document will be documented in your medical record.

HOW IS A CONFLICT BETWEEN AN ADVANCE DIRECTIVE AND THE LaPOST DOCUMENT RESOLVED?

If there are any conflicts or ethical concerns, then appropriate resources – such as ethics committees, care conferences, legal advisors, risk management teams or other administrative and medical resources – may be utilized to resolve the issue. During conflict resolutions, consideration should always be given to the attending physician's assessment of your current health status and the medical indications for care or treatment; the physician's determination as to whether the care specified by the LaPOST document is medically ineffective, non-beneficial or contrary to generally accepted health care standards; and your most recently expressed preferences for treatment.

CAN I REVOKE MY LaPOST DOCUMENT?

Yes. You can revoke the LaPOST document at any time. If you no longer have decision-making capacity, your health care representative may revoke the document if there is new knowledge of a change in your medical condition or wishes. To void a LaPOST document, simply write, "Void," through Sections A-D in large letters and sign and date the document.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LaPOST?

For more information about LaPOST, or to download a copy of the document, visit la-post.org.

