

# LaPOST

Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment

A Handbook For  
Health Care Professionals



A Participating Program  
of National POLST

*April 2021*

## Introduction To LaPOST

Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (LaPOST) is an easily identifiable gold document that translates a patient's goals of care and treatment preferences into a physician's order that transfers across health care settings. The LaPOST document represents a plan of care for a patient with a life-limiting illness, and is modeled after the Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) Paradigm.

The document should be completed after a thorough discussion with the patient or his/her personal health care representative\* regarding the patient's understanding of the illness, treatment preferences, values and goals of care. Completion of a LaPOST document encourages communication between doctors and patients, enables patients to make informed decisions and clearly documents these decisions to other physicians and health care professionals. As a result, LaPOST can help ensure that a patient's wishes are honored, prevent unwanted or non-beneficial treatments and reduce patient and family stress regarding decision-making.

LaPOST does not replace an advance directive, or living will, but it can be used to operationalize the directives of the living will. It is recommended that patients with a life-limiting illness have three (3) documents:

- *LaPOST (Louisiana Physician Order for Scope of Treatment)*
- *Power of attorney for health care*
- *Advance directive (living will)*

The LaPOST document belongs to the patient and travels with the patient as he/she moves from one health care setting to another.

*\*A personal health care representative is defined as a person who has authority in accordance with Louisiana law to act on behalf of an individual related to health care because of incapacity.*

## The Law and LaPOST

In some cases, physicians have been hesitant to follow LaPOST orders without first reassessing the person's wishes in the current clinical situation. However, Louisiana law passed during the 2010 Legislative Session (Act 954) and revised June 13, 2016 requires that LaPOST be followed until a review is completed by the accepting health care professional. The LaPOST document must be followed even if the physician who has signed the document is not on the medical staff of the facility.

The law also states that health care providers who honor LaPOST documents are not subject to criminal prosecution, civil liability or any other sanction as a result of following the orders. Health care institutions are encouraged to develop policy and procedures for the use of LaPOST. Examples of such policies are available at [www.La-POST.org](http://www.La-POST.org) and require appropriate legal consultation.

## The Impact of LaPOST

The LaPOST program was the top priority of the Louisiana Health Care Redesign Collaborative – End of Life Work Group. Research has shown that documents like LaPOST are making a difference in end-of-life care.

Studies in states that have POLST available have revealed that among patients with completed POLST documents, treatment preferences were respected 98 percent of the time, and no one received unwanted CPR, intubation, intensive care or feeding tubes. As a result, POLST has helped to bridge the gap between what treatments patients want and what they receive.

**Additional  
Information**

**Louisiana Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (LaPOST) • [la-post.org](http://la-post.org)  
Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) Paradigm • [polst.org](http://polst.org)**

## LaPOST and the Advance Directive

LaPOST can be used as a stand alone document. It also complements but does not replace an advance directive. An advance directive allows individuals to document the type of medical care that is acceptable in case of a terminal illness and is usually completed in advance of any illness. The advance directive can only be used when the patient is unable to speak for him/herself and if two physicians certify that the patient has a terminal illness. It provides a broad outline of a patient's wishes relating to end-of-life care and may be completed by any adult, regardless of one's health status. An advance directive is not a physician's order, requires interpretation and is often unavailable when needed.

	ADVANCE DIRECTIVE	LaPOST
WHO?	Every adult	Life-limiting illness regardless of age
WHAT?	Broad outline that requires interpretation and translation to a physician's order	Specific physician's order
WHERE?	Needs to be retrieved; no universal system; can be archived with Louisiana Secretary of State for a fee	Travels with patient across health care settings

In contrast, LaPOST is designed for those with life-limiting illnesses and identifies the specific wishes of a patient regarding medical treatments. With the appropriate signatures, the LaPOST document may be used for any person who has a life-limiting illness, regardless of age.

LaPOST is the first statewide, uniform physician's order that is recognized across care settings. The LaPOST document travels with patients when they move from one residential or medical setting to another, providing clear direction about patients' health care treatment wishes for physicians, nurses, emergency responders and other health care providers wherever they are.

## Discussing LaPOST With Patients

Conversations with patients about the type of care they would like to receive as their disease progresses are important. The LaPOST document provides a context for guiding the conversation and makes it more likely that patients will express their treatment wishes and goals of care.

The completion of the LaPOST document involves a thorough discussion between patients and physicians with physicians responsible for the completion of the document. Other members of the health care team - nurses, social workers or chaplains - may also be involved in the conversation about end-of-life care, particularly to address physical, psychosocial and spiritual issues that may arise.

Because the LaPOST document establishes medical orders, a physician must sign the document for it to be valid. The patient or his/her personal health care representative must sign as well to confirm that the orders were discussed and agreed upon. Once signed by both the physician and patient, or the health care representative, LaPOST becomes part of the patient's medical record. It can be modified or revoked at any time based on new information or changes in a patient's condition or treatment preferences.

### A sample conversation with a patient about LaPOST may sound like this:

*"I'd like to talk with you today about what is going on with you. This will help me understand how to best care for you or your family member. We will need to discuss the types of treatments available, what will work, what might work and what will not work and what your goals of care are. After we have that conversation, we will be able to complete a LaPOST document which is a physician's order that outlines the plan of care we discussed. This order will communicate this important information to other members of the health care team so they know how to best care for you during your illness. This document will transfer with you across care settings (hospital to home to nursing home or palliative care). The LaPOST document can be changed or adjusted at any time to ensure that it represents your wishes and goals of care."*

## Using LaPOST

### THE DOCUMENT

The LaPOST document is a two-sided gold form. One side of the document contains the Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (Sections A - D) and the required signature of the physician and the patient or his/her personal health care representative. The other side of the document lists additional instructions, including a description of how to review or void the document. Completion of a LaPOST document is voluntary, and the purpose of the document is to ensure that the patient receives the level of medical care he/she desires regardless of care setting. In institutional settings, LaPOST should be the first document in the clinical record.

## PATIENT TRANSFERS

When a person with a LaPOST document is transferred from one setting to another – for example, from a long-term care facility to a hospital – the original document should accompany that person. A copy of LaPOST, however, should always be kept in the individual’s medical record. Photocopies and faxes of signed LaPOST documents are legal and valid. HIPAA permits disclosure of LaPOST to health care professionals across treatment settings.

## REVIEWING THE DOCUMENT

It is recommended that LaPOST be reviewed periodically. Review is recommended when:

- The patient is transferred from one care setting or level of care to another;
- There is a substantial change in the patient’s health status; or
- The patient’s treatment preferences change.

## VOIDING THE DOCUMENT

A patient with capacity can void the LaPOST document at any time or change his/her mind about treatment. To void a LaPOST document, draw a line through Sections A through D and write “VOID” in large letters. This must be signed and dated by a physician. If the patient no longer has decision-making capacity, the personal health care representative may revoke the LaPOST document if there is new knowledge of a change in the patient’s wishes or medical condition.

## Completing The LaPOST Document

The introductory section on the front of the document includes comments about the LaPOST order and the requirements for health care personnel action. Identifying information must be in the top right corner. Reference is made to the LaPOST website as a resource for information about cultural/religious beliefs about end-of-life care.

The initial section also requires description of the patient’s life-limiting disease and irreversible condition (e.g., cancer, dementia, heart failure or ALS) and goals of care.

The LaPOST document is divided into four sections:

- A. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation*
- B. Medical Interventions*
- C. Artificially Administered Fluids and Nutrition*
- D. Summary*

If a patient requires treatment, the first responder should initiate any treatment orders recorded on the LaPOST document and then contact medical control or the patient’s physician, as indicated. If Section A, B or C is not completed, full treatment should be provided for that section until clarification is obtained.

A thorough discussion of each section and how to complete it is provided in the following pages. Patients should be advised that measures to provide comfort focused treatment will always be given, regardless of the level of medical treatments desired.

## SECTION A: CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR)

<b>A. CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR): PERSON IS UNRESPONSIVE, PULSELESS AND IS NOT BREATHING</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> CPR/Attempt Resuscitation (requires full treatment in section B)	<input type="checkbox"/> When not in cardiopulmonary arrest, follow orders in <b>B</b> and <b>C</b> .
<input type="checkbox"/> DNR/Do Not Attempt Resuscitation (Allow Natural Death)	

These orders apply only when the patient is unresponsive, pulseless and is not breathing. This section does not apply to any other medical circumstances.

This section also does not apply to a patient in respiratory distress (because he/she is still breathing) or to a patient who has a pulse and low blood pressure (because he/she has a pulse). For these situations, the first responder should refer to section B and follow the indicated orders.

If the patient wants CPR and CPR is ordered, then the “CPR /Attempt Resuscitation” box is checked. Full CPR measures should be performed, and 911 should be called. If “CPR /Attempt Resuscitation” is chosen, then the “Full Treatment” box under Section B must also be checked.

If a patient has specified that he/she does not want CPR in the event of no pulse and no respiration, then the “DNR/Do Not Attempt Resuscitation” box is checked. CPR should not be performed. No defibrillator (including automated external defibrillators or AED) should be used on a patient who has chosen “DNR/Do Not Attempt Resuscitation.” The patient should understand that selective or comfort focused treatment as documented will always be provided and that CPR will not be attempted.

**SECTION B: MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS**

**B. MEDICAL INTERVENTIONS: PERSON HAS PULSE OR IS BREATHING**

FULL TREATMENT (primary goal of prolonging life by all medically effective means) Use treatments in Selective Treatment and Comfort Focused treatment. Use mechanical ventilation, advanced airway interventions and cardioversion if indicated.

CHECK ONE  SELECTIVE TREATMENT (primary goal of treating medical conditions while avoiding burdensome treatments) Use treatments in Comfort Focused treatment. Use medical treatment, including antibiotics and IV fluids as indicated. May use non invasive positive airway pressure (CPAP/BiPAP). Do not intubate. Generally avoid intensive care.

COMFORT FOCUSED TREATMENT (primary goal is maximizing comfort) Use medication by any route to provide pain and symptom management. Use oxygen, suctioning and manual treatment of airway obstruction as needed to relieve symptoms. (Do not use treatments listed in full or selective treatment unless consistent with goals of care. Transfer to hospital ONLY if comfort focused treatment cannot be provided in current setting.)

ADDITIONAL ORDERS: (e.g. dialysis, etc.)

---



---

These orders apply to emergency medical circumstances for a patient who has a pulse or is breathing. This section provides orders for situations that are not covered in Section A. If all life-sustaining treatments are desired, the “Full treatment” box is checked.

“Full treatment” is the broadest scope of treatment and includes CPR, ventilators, antibiotics and medications to raise blood pressure among other things. In short, it may involve treatment that would be performed in the ICU.

“Selective treatment” is the second option. It always includes comfort focused treatments and may, for example, involve hospitalization, surgery, antibiotics, IV fluids and blood transfusions. It does not usually involve treatment in the intensive care unit, or ICU.

The third option is “Comfort focused treatment.” The focus is on maximizing quality of life, whatever that might mean to the patient and family. Comfort treatments are those focused on pain and symptom management with medication or other means. The patient receiving any of these three interventions will always be cleaned, turned, positioned, fed and receive appropriate medication. Hospitalization may be involved, but only if comfort cannot be provided in the current setting.

**SECTION C: ARTIFICIALLY ADMINISTERED FLUIDS AND NUTRITION**

Medically assisted nutrition and hydration is optional when it

- cannot reasonably be expected to prolong life
- would be more burdensome than beneficial
- would cause significant physical discomfort

**C. ARTIFICIALLY ADMINISTERED FLUIDS AND NUTRITION: (Always offer food/fluids by mouth as tolerated)**

No artificial nutrition by tube.

CHECK ONE  Trial period of artificial nutrition by tube. (Goal: \_\_\_\_\_ )

Long-term artificial nutrition by tube. (If needed)

Oral fluids and nutrition must be offered to the patient if medically feasible and tolerated. No artificial nutrition by tube is provided for a patient who refuses this treatment or if it is not medically indicated. Consent must be obtained in order to provide this medical treatment.

In patients who are dying, artificial hydration and nutrition (AHN) may be excessively burdensome to the patient and may provide little or no benefit in which case it is not required. In patients with chronic conditions, AHN may not be required if it cannot be expected to prolong life, is excessively burdensome or causes significant physical discomfort.

This is a clinical judgment between a patient or his/her personal health care representative and the physician. Treatments are not required when the patient or the personal health care representative judge that the treatment suggested does not offer a reasonable hope of benefit or places an excessive burden or expense on the family or the community.

If long-term artificial nutrition by tube is medically indicated and desired by the patient, then the appropriate box is checked.

In some cases, a defined trial period of artificial nutrition by tube can allow time to determine the course of an illness or allow the patient an opportunity to clarify his/her goals of care.

**SECTION D: SUMMARY AND SIGNATURES**

<b>D. SUMMARY</b>			
<b>Discussed with:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Patient (Patient has capacity) <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Health Care Representative (PHCR)			
<b>The basis for these orders is:</b>			
<b>CHECK ALL THAT APPLY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient's declaration (can be oral or nonverbal) <input type="checkbox"/> Patient's Personal Health Care Representative (Qualified Patient without capacity) <input type="checkbox"/> Patient's Advance Directive, if indicated, patient has completed an additional document that provides guidance for treatment measures if he/she loses medical decision-making capacity. <input type="checkbox"/> Resuscitation would be medically non-beneficial.	<input type="checkbox"/> Advance Directive dated _____, available and reviewed <input type="checkbox"/> Advance Directive not available <input type="checkbox"/> No Advance Directive <input type="checkbox"/> Health care agent if named in Advance Directive: Name: _____ Phone: _____	
This form is voluntary and the signatures below indicate that the physician orders are consistent with the patient's medical condition and treatment plan and are the known desires or in the best interest of the patient who is the subject of the document.			
_____ PRINT PHYSICIAN'S NAME	_____ PHYSICIAN SIGNATURE (MANDATORY)	_____ PHYSICIAN PHONE NUMBER	_____ DATE (MANDATORY)
_____ PRINT PATIENT OR PHCR NAME	_____ PATIENT OR PHCR SIGNATURE (MANDATORY)	_____ DATE (MANDATORY)	
_____ PHCR RELATIONSHIP	_____ PHCR ADDRESS	_____ PHCR PHONE NUMBER	
<b>SEND FORM WITH PERSON WHENEVER TRANSFERRED OR DISCHARGED</b>			
<b>USE OF ORIGINAL FORM IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED. PHOTOCOPIES AND FAXES OF SIGNED LaPOST FORMS ARE LEGAL AND VALID.</b>			

Upon completion of the orders, the physician checks the box indicating with whom the orders were discussed - the patient or his/her personal health care representative.

The physician and the patient (or personal health care representative) must sign and date the document. This acknowledges that the orders are medically indicated and consistent with the patient's (or personal health care representative's) understanding of his/her illness, treatment preferences, values and goals of care. Additional information supporting these orders should be placed in the medical record.

The orders are not valid without the physician's and patient's or personal health care representative's signature, date and physician phone number. If signed by the personal health care representative, the relationship and authority to act on behalf of the patient must be documented.

The bottom of the LaPOST document includes reminders that the original document should accompany the patient whenever transferred or discharged. Health systems with electronic health record (EHR) capability may scan the LaPOST document to ensure the orders are accessible. The LaPOST document provides communication with the receiving health care team about the treatments desired and goals of care. This helps ensure that the patient's wishes are respected and comfort maintained as he/she moves from one care setting or level of care to another.

## LaPOST Registry

LaPOST and other advance care planning documents in Louisiana have historically existed as paper forms. These documents must be readily available to health care professionals whenever and wherever they are needed to ensure continuity of care as patients transition between health care settings, experience a change in their health condition, or if their treatment preferences change. A paper-based system, though, presents significant challenges for health care professionals and patients.

The first barrier is accessibility, that is, the completed paper document belongs to the patient and is intended to remain with the patient whether in the hospital, at home, in a nursing home or any health setting. It can be misplaced, misfiled, or otherwise, difficult to locate. This is especially important in emergency medical situations when there may be only minutes to make crucial decisions and any delay in accessing the document may result in unwanted or ineffective treatment for the resident. Next, paper documents may contain incomplete or inconsistent information, which can result in contradictory care. Finally, there may also be difficulties in utilizing tracking processes to ensure version control and to prevent duplication.

To address these paper document challenges, the LaPOST Registry was established. The LaPOST Registry is a secure, statewide electronic registry that provides a single source of LaPOST and advance care planning documentation instantly accessible online to authorized health care professionals in any care setting. For more information regarding this registry, refer to the *LaPOST Registry Handbook for Health Care Professionals*.

## Additional Resources

Closure: [www.closure.org](http://www.closure.org)

Compassion and Support: [www.compassionandsupport.org](http://www.compassionandsupport.org)

Caring Connections: [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)

Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency: [www.lopa.org](http://www.lopa.org)

*Note: This document provides links to third party websites that are not sponsored, endorsed and/or affiliated in any way with LaPOST and/or the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum. In providing these third party links, no specific view or belief is endorsed or intended to be endorsed. These links to third party websites are provided as a courtesy and are intended for educational and informational purposes only. The information and content provided through these third party websites does not represent the views or opinions of LaPOST and/or the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum, and LaPOST and the Louisiana Health Care Quality Forum does not endorse, sponsor or adopt the views, beliefs and/or content expressed through these third party websites.*

To learn more about LaPOST, call: [1-225-300-4826](tel:1-225-300-4826) or visit: [www.la-post.org](http://www.la-post.org).



8550 United Plaza Blvd. | Suite 301 | Baton Rouge, LA 70809 | [la-post.org](http://la-post.org) | 225.334.9299