



**To:** NHPCO State Members

**From:** Jon Keyserling, Vice President, Public Policy and Communications  
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**Subject:** *Means to a Better End* Messages and Q&A

**Date:** November 5, 2002

NHPCO has been working with the public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton to provide a response to the *Last Acts* publication *Means to a Better End* state-by-state ranking project on end-of-life care. The Last Acts press conference and satellite media tour is now scheduled for Monday, November 18. The attached messages and sample Q&A are designed to help you address any media inquiries that might result from this report. Although the report is embargoed until 11 a.m. EST on that day, we want to prepare you for findings that focus more on the deficiencies in end of life care than the accomplishments.

We assume that Last Acts personnel will serve as the national spokespeople for the ranking, but regional media may want to localize the story with end of life expertise from your market. The Last Acts action guide provides an array of suggestions for how to generate media interest in the story, so we won't belabor that aspect of the effort. However, the attached messages and bridging phrases should help you accomplish two objectives:

- Steer reporters from a broad end of life perspective to a more targeted look at hospice
- Provide positive balance to a report that focuses primarily on end of life care deficiencies and barriers

We would anticipate a local focus for most regional media questions. For instance:

- What does this mean for local patients?
- Do you think our state rankings are valid?
- How could they be improved?
- Should we be alarmed?
- What does this say about the end of life care your program delivers?

With that said, you may be asked to comment on the rankings themselves: methodology, findings and recommendations for action. Since you are not in a position of authority to comment on specifics of the study, we recommend you use an interview control technique called bridging to briefly respond to the question, then transition to your area of expertise and focus: hospice.

Here is a list of bridging phrases that might work for you:

- I wasn't involved in the design of methodology or criteria, so I can't comment specifically on that aspect of the ranking. What I can tell you is.....

- I don't think that's the case here in xxxx. In our community, we.....
- That's not really my area of expertise, but I am very experienced in .....
- That's interesting, but what's really important in end of life care is.....
- That's academically intriguing, but we find that patients and families are really focused on .....

We believe it is always important to limit yourself to three messages or themes, but it's even more critical when serving as a secondary spokesperson. If included, you'll likely be an appendage to the story, not the focus, so keep it simple and back up your message with compelling stories that have a chance of being included because they're real, they're touching and they capture interest.

The three themes, which intentionally focus on hospice/palliative care more than the report, are:

- Hospice/palliative care is meeting end of life needs better than ever
- Earlier and more wide-spread use of hospice/palliative care would benefit patient and family
- We hope that the rankings will spark public discussion – because more is needed

We hope you find this information helpful. The following may be helpful contacts for you if you need additional help:

NHPCO staff:

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