



YSA Service Councils

Principles and Ward Organization

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Overview

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said on numerous occasions, “Every convert needs three things: **a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with the good word of God.** It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things... Brethren, the loss of converts must stop. It is unnecessary. I am satisfied the Lord is not pleased with us... I invite you, every one of you, to make this a matter of priority in your administrative work... You are not bound by rigid rules. You have unlimited flexibility. You are entitled to answers to your prayers, to inspiration, and revelation from the Lord in dealing with this matter.”

Heeding this counsel is our goal, our objective and our motto. YSA Service Councils are an effective way to involve every member of a singles ward in a meaningful church calling (with return and report) while also allowing many opportunities to serve other ward members. This system has proven to be effective in bringing members to Christ. Stake leadership has seen a great number of stake members spending time with their bishop resolving problems, transgressions and difficulties.

There has been an increase in the level of spirituality in sacrament and testimony meetings. Church attendance is higher than previously thought possible. The payment of tithes and offerings has increased. In fact, fast offering donations have doubled. President Harold B. Lee stated, “When you double your fast offering you double your spirituality.” There have been other benefits such as an increase in the quality of home and visiting teaching, the number of friendships in a ward, temple attendance, the number of members finding their eternal companion, and the number of sisters who decide to serve missions. In every way the quality of life seems to have improved.

The purpose of this guide is to help those who lead and serve under YSA Service Councils, and to those who may want to consider their use. A ward organization using YSA Service Councils consists of a bishopric, Relief Societies and elders quorums of approximately 30 members each, and 11 councils. Eleven councils are responsible for the day-to-day activities of a ward. The bishopric, elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies are free to minister to the needs of individual ward members. This document describes how this is done.

The Evolution of YSA Service Councils

The idea for the use of YSA Service Councils began with the recognition that each of the BYU student singles’ wards has 150 to 200 active adult members of the Church. In a traditional ward, there are a number of Priesthood and Auxiliary functions that provide ample opportunity for adult ward members to serve. In a young single-adult ward, the functions include only elders quorum, Relief Society and Sunday School. In fact, there are more adult members anxious to serve in a singles ward than exist in a conventional ward. How many adults are needed to staff a Sunday School, a Relief Society and an elders quorum? Very few.

The challenge remained how to provide meaningful callings for up to 200 single adults while maintaining efficiency. Obviously more than an elders quorum, Relief Society and Sunday School were needed. Leadership also recognized that ward members had very few friends in the BYU ward community. A survey revealed that a typical student had fewer than 10 people in the ward

that they could call a friend. Many ward members did not even know the members of their own home evening group well enough to call them “friend”. The survey also revealed that the majority of ward members had a very limited social life. Many members of the ward dated very infrequently if at all.

Immediate benefits begin to be realized from individual ward members having a meaningful calling that required both training and an opportunity to return and report. The number of friendships in a ward will increase dramatically. As a result of smaller and more efficient Relief Societies and elders quorums, home and visiting teaching becomes more effective.

Instead of the various councils being strictly activities oriented, they are adjuncts to the elders quorum and the Relief Society presidencies in a real effort to bring the ward members to Christ. The elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies concentrate on ministering to and meeting the needs of their members. The result is more intense activity. There will be an increase in marriages and an increase in the number of sisters who serve missions. Wards will have greater unity and be more spiritually oriented than ever before. Most importantly, members who were troubled by either transgression or personal problems find their way to the bishop for his assistance in resolving issues.

Integrating the Ward Organization into the Semester

The changing of semesters at a student young single adult ward has a dramatic effect. At the beginning of a semester there is a significant change in ward membership. Home teaching and visiting teaching relationships are interrupted. New leaders must be chosen. The membership of Relief Societies and elders quorums may change dramatically.

We suggest that callings be for a single semester. This means that every four months a whole new ward organization is called, set apart, trained and given new experiences to grow. This presents the ward with many benefits and some challenges. There is no time to lose. All presidencies, chairs and co-chairs must be called at the end of the semester in preparation for the coming semester. All other ward organization should happen during the first week of the semester. As soon as someone is called to a position of responsibility, they must realize the clock is running. They have a very short time to serve the Lord in this position and they must take advantage of each moment. Everyone must begin functioning immediately.

This presents an important training responsibility to the bishopric and stake leaders. That is why so much emphasis is placed upon training in this document. To accommodate this training need, most of the bishop’s meetings during the first month of the semester are devoted to training—especially the Welfare Meeting and the Ward Council Meeting.

Role of the Stake Presidency

Members of the stake presidency provide a vision for the stake, as well as teach, train, and conduct priesthood interviews.

Vision

Members of the stake presidency provide a vision for the stake. They inspire stake and ward leaders with vision, helping them focus on the mission to minister to members rather than administering programs. Members of the stake Relief Society presidency, members of the high council, and Relief Society specialists may be consulted and asked to assist in establishing the vision and any related goals for the stake.

Teach

Members of the stake presidency are teachers. They provide instruction on YSA Service Councils, gospel principles, doctrine and duties to the stake and ward leaders. They ensure that the principles, responsibilities, and blessings related to the gospel, ministering to each member and the use of YSA Service Councils are taught regularly in the stake and wards.

Train

Members of the stake presidency train the stake Relief Society presidency, members of the high council, stake Relief Society specialists, and bishoprics.

Priesthood Interviews

Members of the stake presidency conduct regular priesthood interviews with the stake Relief Society presidency, members of the high council, bishoprics and elders quorum presidencies. This serves as an opportunity for these leaders to provide an accounting to the stake presidency for their stewardship and for the stake presidency to provide instruction and training, to discuss the needs of these leaders and the stake and ward resources available to help meet those needs, and to verify the accuracy of monthly reports.

Role of the Stake Relief Society Presidency

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency direct the efforts of the stake Relief Society to accomplish the Relief Society's purpose and objectives. They teach, train, and conduct stewardship interviews.

Teach

Stake Relief Society presidency members teach Relief Society specialist and ward Relief Society presidencies the purposes and objectives of the Relief Society.

Train

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency train Relief Society specialists and ward Relief Society presidencies. They serve as a resource to ward Relief Society presidencies. They instruct and advise individual presidencies as requested by the ward or directed by the stake presidency.

Stewardship Interviews

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency conduct regular interviews with the Relief Society specialists. They also conduct "Return and Report" interviews with each ward Relief Society presidency regularly. This serves as an opportunity for these leaders to provide an accounting to the stake Relief Society presidency for their stewardship and for the stake Relief Society

presidency to provide instruction and training, to discuss the needs of these leaders and the stake and ward resources available to help meet those needs, and to verify the accuracy of monthly reports.

Role of the High Councilors and Relief Society Specialists

The *Church Handbook of Instructions* addresses the subject of single members and students and says, “The stake presidency and other stake leaders consult with single members to determine their needs and make plans to help meet them. The stake president assigns a high councilor (and in the 15th stake a Relief Society specialist) to help oversee stake activities and programs for single members.”

In this assignment, the high councilors and Relief Society specialists are key ingredients in the success of YSA Service Councils. According to the *Church Handbook of Instructions*, the high councilors play an important role in the training of the elders quorum presidencies. In the BYU singles wards it is not unusual for an elders quorum president to have no previous experience as a president. The same is true of the Relief Society presidents. Most of the elders have previously served missions whereas most of the Relief Society presidents have not. Prior to their BYU experience, many of the sisters have not even attended Relief Society.

Under YSA Service Councils, the high councilor has the primary role of developing capable, faithful and ministering-oriented elders quorum presidents. The Relief Society specialist, who is commonly the wife of the high councilor, has primary responsibility for developing capable, faithful and ministering-oriented Relief Society presidents.

Early in each semester, there is a heavy demand for training of elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies. The presidencies will most likely serve for a single semester. Simply put, there is no time to waste. For this reason training has been carefully organized during the semester’s first month.

The high councilor and specialist should review their training agenda with the bishop for his input and approval. Part of the high councilor’s and specialist’s training may be done with both elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies together. Some of the material should to be covered separately. The training includes, but is not limited to:

1. Ministering and consulting responsibilities.
2. Home and visiting teaching (over-view only—detail in meeting with counselors and secretaries).
 - a. The Vision—Why?
 - b. Organizing companionships (see pages 168-170 and 202-204 of the *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*).
 - c. Assigning people to teach.
 - d. Extending assignments for home and visiting teaching in a formal manner, not just a slip of paper.
 - e. Assigning senior/junior com-canonships—its importance.
 - f. Need to change companion-ships.
 - g. Reporting on progress.

3. Sunday meetings.
 - a. Announcements
 - b. Music
 - c. Teachers
 - d. Prayers
 - e. Topics, Lessons, pre-lessons and where to find lesson schedules
 - f. Coordination
 - g. Facilities
4. Conducting and managing presidency meetings by using:
 - a. Agendas
 - b. Minutes
 - c. Action plans
 - d. Training
5. Confidentiality.
 - a. Needs to President.
 - b. Needs to Bishop.
6. How and when to use other councils.
 - a. Examples.
 - b. Contacting chairs and/or co-chairs.
7. Stake personal priesthood interviews and return and report meetings.
 - a. Why.
 - b. When.
8. Delegating responsibilities to others.
9. Enrichment Activities (Relief Society only).
 - a. One per semester.
 - b. Purpose.
 - c. Facilities, etc.
 - d. Small group activities.
10. Administering as guided by Doctrine & Covenants 121:34-44.

See more training guidelines on pages 16-19 of this manual.

Role of the Bishopric

Members of the bishopric provide a vision for the ward, as well as teach, train, organize the ward, conduct stewardship interviews, get to know every member, and interview every member of the ward.

Vision

Members of the bishopric provide a vision for the ward. They inspire other ward leaders with vision, helping them focus on their mission to minister to members rather than administering programs. The ward council may be consulted and used to assist in establishing the vision and related goals for each semester. This is an opportunity for the bishopric to model and teach by example the principles of directing a council.

Teach and Train

Members of the bishopric are teachers. They provide instruction on welfare principles and responsibilities, doctrine and duties in welfare meeting, ward council, stewardship inter-views and member interviews.

Organize the Ward

Members of the bishopric call and set apart Relief Society presidencies and council chairs and co-chairs by the last Sunday of each semester in preparation for the coming semester. The interview at the time of the call can be an effective time for valuable training. The member of the bishopric extending the calling should provide training materials and documents to the presidency member or chair and co-chair, discuss how many members should be on the respective councils, explain to whom the council will report, and their obligation to come to the ward organizational meeting with several names in mind to fill their council. Later on, the council leaders and presidencies should be instructed in the budget and reimbursement process.

Councils

Bishop's counselors have primary responsibility for the councils. This includes calling, setting apart and training chairs and co-chairs, attending council meetings as necessary and conducting stewardship interviews with the council chairs and co-chairs. Counselors explain the specific duties of each council to the chairs and co-chair and encourage them to quickly develop a program for the semester. During ward council meetings, the bishopric should do more approving than planning.

Stewardship Interviews

The bishop conducts regular stewardship interviews with the elders quorum presidents (or presidencies) and Relief Society presidents (or presidencies). The bishop's counselors conduct regular stewardship interviews with council chairs and co-chairs. This is an opportunity for these leaders to make an accounting to the bishopric for their stewardship and for the bishopric to provide instruction and training, to discuss the needs of each member for whom these leaders are responsible and the ward resources available to help meet those needs, and to verify the accuracy of monthly reports. The bishop should also request a list of persons not visited by home or visiting teachers during the previous month.

Member Interviews

The members of the bishopric interview each member of the ward each semester.

Role of the Elders Quorum Presidency

The elders quorum presidency reports directly to the stake president. While they may receive direction and feedback from the bishop of the ward, and in fact should do so, the stake president has ultimate stewardship over the affairs of the quorum of elders. Elders quorum presidencies will work closely with the high councilor assigned to the ward to receive training and answers to procedural concerns.

Elders Quorum Presidency Organization

One president and two counselors are called by a stake leader for each of the elders quorum presidencies in a ward. The two counselors are to function in the administrative duties that would normally consume valuable time from the president's time to minister. All members of the presidency should actively focus on their respective callings for a minimum of 30 minutes each day.

Home Teaching Organization

The president has the prerogative to delegate responsibilities to his counselors as he deems necessary. As such, the first and second counselors to the president will work with the president to organize home teaching as prescribed in *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, pages 168-170. It is important that the presidency identify the elders who have been 100% home teachers in the past and assign them as senior companions. Surveying the elders the first Sunday of the semester by asking them to write their previous home teaching performance on a small slip of paper will be helpful. The counselors should keep accurate records of home teaching performance and accomplishments for help in making future assignments. It is extremely important that "leaders assign the most effective home teachers to the members who need them most" (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, page 168).

The counselors will divide the quorum and each counselor will have stewardship over half the elders. They will speak to each worthy member of the quorum individually to make assignments in home teaching, emphasizing the importance of their assignments. Home teaching is an assignment and not a calling and should be addressed as such. The counselor should also explain that he will be in contact with the home teacher many times during the month to review the needs of the home teacher and his home teachers. Counselors should make every effort to ensure the home teacher is committed and willing to finish all home teaching responsibilities and effectively resolve any concerns that may be presented.

Counselors will remind home teachers that their responsibility is not simply one monthly visit, but rather a need to have genuine love and concern for their home teachers. This will at times necessitate visits during the month. Friendship and trust is the key to effective home teaching. Counselors should invite home teachers to pray for their home teachers by name. Home teachers should leave a card with their names and contact numbers for each home teacher to make contact more inviting.

Personal Priesthood Interviews by Elders Quorum Presidents

The president should hold individual meetings with members of the quorum he has stewardship over in home teaching responsibilities to consult and address needs. These meetings should include, but are not limited to: spiritually uplifting messages, training when appropriate, exploration of the individuals' needs, goal setting, friendship-building conversations and prayer. When the president suspects a member has serious needs, the member should be directed to the bishop immediately. Confidentiality is an absolute must in all matters involving ward members.

Responsibilities of Presidency Members

The *Church Handbook of Instructions* states, “The bishopric, priesthood leaders, and Relief Society leaders consult with single members to determine their needs and make plans to help meet them” (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1*, page 108).

Every member of the quorum should be interviewed at least once a month by the first or second counselor who has stewardship over them. These PPI’s are to inquire about the needs of the respective elder, the needs of each person being home taught by the elder, and to set action plans to resolve challenges that either the home teacher being interviewed or the home teachee may have. Counselors should also use this time to build strong, lasting relationships with the member, set personal goals with the elder and share an inspirational and spiritually uplifting message. Counselors will ask the member for permission to follow up with future visits or phone calls so as to get to know them better.

In the April 2004 General Conference, Elder Henry B. Eyring stated, “When you meet someone, treat them as if they were in serious trouble, and you will be right more than half the time.” The president and counselors consult with quorum members over whom they have stewardship responsibilities to discover their needs and address them. The presidency should help members with needs get to the bishop when necessary.

Part of a presidency member’s 30 minutes devoted to his calling each day should include getting to know the members over whom he has stewardship. This can be done by making short visits or talking on the phone. The counselor should refrain from inquiring about home teaching progress in every encounter but rather should ask simple questions about the individual. It is important to remember personal information about the person’s family life, goals, hobbies, and other important issues to the individual. Asking about these important facts during a future contact will show the member the counselor has listened and does indeed care about the individual. Attempts to get to know members of the ward should be genuine and based in love for the individual.

One of the most important responsibilities of the presidency is to gain the trust and friendship of each member of the ward. An effective interview will be one that includes more talking by the member and more listening by the interviewer. Consulting consists of asking sincere questions and then listening intently without interjecting suggestions or criticism. Listening and then acting on inspiration from the Spirit will change members for the better.

Role of the Relief Society Presidency

The Relief Society presidency reports to the bishop. The presidency will receive training from the stake Relief Society presidency and the Relief Society specialist assigned to the ward. The stake Relief Society leaders should be used as a resource by the ward Relief Society presidencies.

Relief Society Presidency Organization

One president and two counselors are called by the bishopric for each of the Relief Society presidencies in a ward. The two counselors are to function in the administrative duties that would normally consume valuable time from the president’s time to minister. All members of the presidency should actively focus on their respective callings for a minimum of 30 minutes each day.

Visiting Teaching Organization

The president has the prerogative to delegate responsibilities to her counselors as she deems necessary. As such, the first and second counselors to the president will work with the president to organize visiting teaching as prescribed in *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, pages 202-204. It is important that the presidency identify the sisters who have been 100% visiting teachers in the past and assign them as senior companions. Surveying the sisters the first Sunday of the semester by asking them to write their previous visiting teaching performance on a small slip of paper will be helpful. The counselors should keep accurate records of visiting teaching performance and accomplishments for help in making future assignments. It is extremely important that “leaders assign the most effective [visiting] teachers to the members who need them most” (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2*, page 168.)

The counselors will divide the Relief Society and have responsibility for half the sisters. They will speak to each worthy member of the group individually to make assignments in visiting teaching, emphasizing the importance of their assignments. Visiting teaching is an assignment and not a calling and should be addressed as such. The counselor should also explain that she will be in contact with the visiting teacher many times during the month to review the needs of the visiting teacher and her visiting tachees. Counselors should make every effort to ensure the visiting teacher is committed and willing to finish all visiting teaching responsibilities and effectively resolve any concerns that may be presented.

Counselors will remind visiting teachers that their responsibility is not simply one monthly visit, but rather a need to have genuine love and concern for their visiting tachees. This will at times necessitate visits during the month. Friendship and trust is the key to effective visiting teaching. Counselors should invite visiting teachers to pray for their visiting tachees by name. Visiting teachers should leave a card with their names and contact numbers for each visiting tachee to make contact more inviting.

Stewardship Interviews by Relief Society Presidents

The president should hold individual meetings with members of the Relief Society to consult and address needs. These meetings should include, but are not limited to: spiritually uplifting messages, training when appropriate, exploration of individuals’ needs, goal setting, friendship-building conversations and prayer. When the president suspects a member has serious needs, the member should be directed to the bishop immediately. Confidentiality is an absolute must in all matters involving ward members. Presidents should ask for permission to make follow up visits or phone calls when needed.

Responsibilities of Presidency Members

The *Church Handbook of Instructions* states, “The bishopric, priesthood leaders, and Relief Society leaders consult with single members to determine their needs and make plans to help meet them” (*Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 1*, page 108).

Every member of the Relief Society should be interviewed at least once a month by the first or second counselor who has stewardship over them. These interviews are to inquire about the needs of the respective sister, the needs of each person being visit taught by the sister, and to set action

plans to resolve challenges that either the visiting teacher being interviewed or the visiting teachee may have. Counselors should also use this time to build strong, lasting relationships with the member, set personal goals with the sister and share an inspirational and spiritually uplifting message. Counselors will ask the member for permission to follow up with future visits or phone calls so as to get to know them better.

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Part of a presidency member’s 30 minutes devoted to her calling each day should include getting to know the members over whom she has stewardship. This can be done by making short visits or talking on the phone. The counselor should refrain from inquiring about visiting teaching progress in every encounter but rather should ask simple questions about the individual. It is important to remember personal information about the person’s family life, goals, hobbies, and other important issues to the individual. Asking about these important facts during a future encounter will show the member the counselor has listened and does indeed care about the individual. Attempts to get to know members of the ward should be genuine and based in love for the individual.

One of the most important responsibilities of the presidency is to gain the trust and friendship of each member of the ward. An effective interview will be one that includes more talking by the member and more listening by the interviewer. Consulting consists of asking sincere questions and then listening intently without interjecting suggestions or criticism. Listening and then acting on inspiration from the Spirit will change members for the better.

Ward Organizational Meeting

The ward organizational meeting is conducted as early in the semester as possible, usually in the first week. The purpose for this meeting is to assist the bishopric in finding a meaningful calling with return and report responsibilities for each member in the ward.

Preparation

The ward clerk and executive secretaries create a list of all ward members eligible for a ward calling and distribute them to the ward leadership prior to the organization meeting. Each organization and council has previously determined how many members will be needed to fulfill council responsibilities. Ward leaders have visited ward members and sought inspiration to determine who should serve on each council. This promotes visits to new members by several ward leaders in the first few days of the semester. Leaders are encouraged to prayerfully consider more persons than are needed to staff their organization or council. The executive secretaries prepare cards labeled with each member’s name, pink for sisters and blue for brothers, which are displayed on a blackboard while the names of each organization and council are listed on an adjacent blackboard. The bishopric determines the order in which each council will make selections and whether a council, i.e. home evening, will make more than one selection in any round. Some callings will be selected before the organizational meeting, such as executive secretaries, clerks, or other stake callings.

The Meeting

Ward leaders attend in Sunday dress and come in an attitude of fasting and prayer as directed by the bishop. The meeting begins with a hymn and prayer and the bishop or executive secretary then explains how the selections will proceed. Leaders are encouraged to discuss what callings will be best suited to the needs of the individual members and the work of each council. Leaders then select members by name and the name card is moved to the appropriate council until each organization and council is staffed and each member has a calling. The bishopric, the member of the high council and the Relief Society specialist are available as resources to the ward leaders during the selection process.

After the Meeting

The bishopric reviews the final selections and makes any changes needed. The ward clerks and executive secretaries provide lists of each calling and the overall ward organization for the bishopric. The bishopric extends the callings as soon as possible.

Setting Apart Council Members

Once council members have been called and then sustained in sacrament meeting, elders quorum presidency members along with the priesthood-holding chair or co-chair of the respective council set apart the council members. Those performing the setting aparts will inform the executive secretaries or ward clerks to keep the ward records current.

Councils—How They Work

A member of the bishopric calls and sets apart the chairs and co-chairs of the eleven councils. The Missionary and Fellowship, Temple and Family History, Spiritual and Temporal Welfare, and Gospel Teaching and Leadership Councils must have an elder as chair of that council. Other councils may have either an elder or a sister as chair.

At the beginning of the semester the bishop's counselors meet with each assigned chair and co-chair and council members to:

1. Give each of their councils specific assignments (some are itemized in this manual under "Council Responsibilities", pages 13-15).
2. Instruct the chairs and co-chairs to define a vision and then work with their council members to create and implement a program based on that vision that will bless ward members.

As the semester progresses, the bishop's counselors meet every week with each assigned council chair and co-chair. During these meetings, the bishop's counselors will discuss the following items:

1. Is the council fulfilling its assignments?
2. Has the council created and implemented their special program?
3. Is the council meeting together weekly with ALL council members?

Leader’s Responsibilities under YSA Service Councils

All leaders have key responsibilities in moving the YSA Service Councils along on a steady course.

Council Chair and Co-Chair

Each chair and co-chair attends welfare meeting and ward council each week. The chairs and co-chairs meet weekly with their council members. The chair presides but gives the co-chair opportunities to conduct. When conducting, the chair or co-chair uses the method as outlined in this manual, Appendix D. Only when all council members are involved is your council fully active and functioning.

Council Members

Each council should try to include at least one member from each elders quorum and Relief Society. More members may be called when the workload is heavy or more callings are needed. Each member attends a monthly ward council meeting and his or her weekly council-planning meeting. Each council member should be involved, give input, and complete assignments.

Elder M. Russell Ballard wrote in his book *Counseling with Our Council*, “One who is called to serve on a Church council should remember that his or her participation on the council is a privilege. And with that privilege comes responsibility—responsibility to work within the parameters of the organization, to be prepared, to share, to advocate vigorously the position he or she believes to be right. But just as important is the responsibility to support and sustain the final decision of the council leader. Furthermore, each council member has a responsibility to be spiritually in tune when taking part in council meetings so that he or she can make a positive contribution to the issues being discussed.”

High Councilor and Relief Society Specialist

The high councilor’s primary assignment is to instruct and train elders quorum presidencies and the Relief Society specialist’s primary responsibility is to instruct and train Relief Society presidencies. This training is accomplished primarily by:

1. Attending one Sunday presidency meeting each month with each presidency during bishopric meeting to observe progress.
2. Meeting three times a month with elders quorum and Relief Society counselors and secretaries during welfare meeting for training as outlined in the schedule on pages 15-16.
3. Visiting each elders quorum (high councilor) and each Relief Society (specialist) once a month during the regular block schedule and speaking for up to ten minutes in that meeting. Inform the president of the group one week before speaking and determine an appropriate topic to address.
4. Attending a PPI or stewardship interview regularly with a member of the stake presidency or stake Relief Society presidency along with elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies. The high councilor or specialist should meet with the interviewer for 10-15 minutes before the presidencies enter the interview to prepare for the meeting.

5. The high councilor will ensure ward clerks and quorum secretaries understand the responsibilities of their callings. Specialized training is available from www.lds.org and the stake clerk's office.

The stake needs to communicate information as well as coordinate meetings, projects, events, and assignments to various councils in wards throughout the stake. To accomplish this goal, each of the eleven councils will have an assigned high councilor who will be the coordinator for that council on the stake level. This assigned council coordinator (high councilor) may use the remaining eleven high councilors to deliver the information to the relevant chair and co-chair in their assigned wards.

The council coordinator (high councilor) meets with ward chairs and co-chairs of his assigned council as needed. He may also hold training meetings with them during the semester. The high councilor overseeing the Missionary Council will meet with his council members every month. Other councils will meet during the semester as necessary.

Ward Council—Key to Success

There are several purposes for Ward Council.

1. Training—greater need at the beginning of the semester.
2. Coordination—correlation and calendaring ward events.
3. Return and Report—an opportunity for councils, including council members, to inform the bishopric and other ward leaders on their council's progress.
4. Information—to inform the ward leadership of bishopric objective and stake activities for ward correlation.

The beginning of each semester is front-loaded with training for all members of the ward. Spending extra time at the start of the semester will pay dividends of success beyond measure compared to the initial sacrifice. The schedule for this intense training is listed on pages 15 and 16 of this manual.

During the initial meetings, the bishopric should assign a budget to each group. All instructional material and manuals from the previous leaders should be given to the new leaders. After the first month, ward council meeting is held three times each month, with one third of the ward's councils invited to report at each meeting; therefore, each council, including its chair, co-chair and all council members, attends ward council once each month. Attendance also includes the bishopric, presidents of elders quorum and Relief Society, council chairs and co-chairs, an enrichment leader, the high councilor and the Relief Society specialist. The bishop presides at this meeting but his counselors or the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents may conduct.

Council Responsibilities

Activities Council

See *Church Handbook of Instruction, Book 2*, Section 10. Plans and organizes all major ward activities and dinners. Responsible for the sports program.

Friendship Council

Promotes small group activities throughout the ward. Identifies those in the ward who need more social acceptance, and creates ways to encourage them to become involved and included. Works to have all ward members know each other and to be friends.

Gospel Teaching and Leadership Council

See *Church Handbook of Instruction, Book 2, Section 16*. The Sunday School President (an elder) is the council chair. All Sunday School, elders quorum and Relief Society teachers are council members. The teacher improvement classes are taught for 25 minutes during each weekly council meeting. The council also supervises ward prayer and sponsors Sunday firesides. Please see Appendix C for more instructions.

Home Evening Council

Organizes home evening groups (about eight groups per ward) composed of three to six apartments, depending on the number of occupants. These groups are dissolved every five weeks and new groups are formed with different apartments. One council member who functions as the home evening supervisor is assigned to each group. Based on the schedule created by the chair and co-chair, the supervisor contacts each apartment in his or her group to initiate home evening activities. The supervisor also hosts home evening at his or her apartment each Monday evening and assigns group members to give uplifting, gospel-based lessons, prepare social activities and provide refreshments. Everyone in the group should be given responsibilities during the weeks the group is together.

Institute Council

All members of this council should attend institute. Their responsibility is to identify all ward members who are not attending a mid-week religion class and encourage these members to attend a weekly institute class.

Missionary and Fellowship Council

See *Church Handbook of Instruction, Book 2, Section 7*. Takes care of new converts. Teaches the missionary preparation class, "Preach My Gospel." Works with all non-members. Assists those that are less active.

Music Council

See *Church Handbook of Instruction, Book 2, Section 14*. Oversees the music for all ward and auxiliary meetings. Selects hymns and special musical numbers with the bishop's approval. Organizes a ward choir. All musical personnel in the ward are assigned to this council.

Publicity Council

Organizes and publishes a ward directory. Maintains the ward bulletin board and ward calendar. Prints and distributes sacrament meeting programs and arranges for sacrament meeting prayers (with bishop's approval). Provides greeters for sacrament meeting and publicity for ward organizations and councils. Notifies ward members of meetings. Manages the ward website and encourages members to register for that site.

Service Council

See Matt. 25:31-46 and Mosiah 2:17. Organizes opportunities for ward members to serve each other. Creates ways for ward members to give humanitarian and community service to others. Organizes the ward blood drive.

Spiritual and Temporal Welfare Council

See *Church Handbook of Instruction, Book 2, Section 8*. Encourages daily scripture study, personal prayer, modesty in dress and appearance, avoidance of pornography, gambling and eating disorders, wise choice of music and entertainment, and appropriate time spent each day on church callings. Teaches emergency preparedness, personal safety, self-reliance and counsels on abuse issues. Assists members needing employment or other financial needs.

Temple & Family History Council

See *Church Handbook of Instruction, Book 2, Section 9*. Teaches the family history class and encourages family history research. Encourages members to go often to the temple and become temple workers if applicable.

Council Interaction

It is important for the councils to recognize that they exist to support the ward's ecclesiastical leadership. The ecclesiastical leadership includes the bishopric, the elders quorum presidencies and the Relief Society presidencies. The councils exist to help each member come unto Christ. Often the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies may request specific assistance from any of the councils. The council chairs and co-chairs should respond to these requests as if the bishop himself has made the request. For example, when the Relief Society or elders quorum presidency recognizes one of their members has few friends or is lonely, they may request assistance from the Friendship Council.

Councils may choose to coordinate activities. For instance, in planning a fireside the Gospel Teaching and Leadership Council may ask the Music Council to provide special musical numbers. Or, the Home Evening Council may request assistance from the Activities Council in planning a special Home Evening function.

Where a similar interest exists, councils may also choose to combine activities. This will tend to eliminate an excessive number of events in the ward emphasizing quality over quantity while still allowing each council to magnify its purpose and accomplish its vision.

The publicity council must interact with all other councils in order to effectively publicize the ward's events.

Appendix A

Training

“Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.”

Doctrine and Covenants 107:99

Presidencies, bishoprics and council leaders are to teach, instruct and train those within their stewardship. This training should serve as a time to educate, clarify, and remind those present of the duties and principles requisite to their callings. The focus of the training should be on principles so leaders gain an understanding that will assist them in receiving revelation for their calling. This will empower current leaders and help develop future leaders. Topics and ideas for training may be found in the scriptures, the teachings of latter-day prophets, *The Church Handbook of Instructions*, *Counseling with our Councils*, and other Church-approved training materials. Training should occur in all stake, bishopric, presidency, council, and welfare and ward council meetings. Other teaching and training opportunities include: priesthood interviews, sacrament meeting, tithing settlement, and disciplinary councils. Training sessions will vary, but can usually be effective in as few as five to ten minutes. Training is separate from a spiritual thought.

Training of Elders Quorum and Relief Society Presidencies

As the high councilor and Relief Society specialist meet with the counselors and secretaries, the training concentrates on the responsibilities that are delegated to these positions by the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents—i.e. managing home teaching and visiting teaching and proper reporting, as well as consulting and ministering to members needs:

1. Consulting and ministering
 - a. Each counselor consults with those over which they have stewardship, i.e. home teaching and visiting teaching.
 - b. Obtain permission to call and visit members to develop trust and a lasting relationship.
 - c. Communicate often to become friends and show a genuine interest.
 - d. Ask questions and then *listen*.
 - e. Spend 30 minutes each day wisely magnifying your calling.
 - f. Do not be critical or give advice while consulting—the counselor’s job is to listen.
 - g. Talk about more personal topics after you have built a relationship of friendship and trust.
 - h. Consulting takes time and effort—take time to listen.
 - i. Keep a record of contacts made in person or by phone and report them in the monthly report.
2. Stewardship interviews with visiting teachers
 - a. Establish relationship of trust.
 - b. Become friends by bringing your heart to theirs
 - c. Listen.

- d. Finding and reviewing the needs of sisters through visiting teaching.
 - e. Establish monthly goals and objectives.
 - f. Pray together for individuals and the Spirit.
3. Personal Priesthood Interviews with home teachers
- a. Primary objective of the personal priesthood interview is to review the needs that were identified during the home teaching visit.
 - b. Because the needs may have a short shelf-life, the personal priesthood interview should be conducted promptly following the teaching.
 - c. During the personal priesthood interview, create and establish warm, friendly, trusting relationships.
 - d. Counsel regarding needs that the presidency is aware of that would aid the home teachers.
 - e. Establish monthly goals and objectives.
 - f. Pray together for individuals and the Spirit.
4. The 5-10-15-20 = 100% System—Teach home and visiting teachers to:
- a. Make contact with the people they teach by the 5th of each month.
 - b. Make an appointment to visit by the 10th of each month.
 - c. Visit the people they teach by the 15th of each month.
 - d. Report by the 20th of each month to the appropriate secretary.
5. Reporting on visiting teaching and home teaching
- a. Reason for reporting.
 - b. Information needed for stake report.
 - c. Timing for stake report.
 - d. Secretaries' responsibilities.
 - e. Counselors' responsibilities.
 - f. Presidents' responsibilities.
 - g. Difference between contacts and visits.
6. Establishing quorum and Relief Society unity.

Training Chairs, Co-Chairs and Council Members

“Your obligation is as serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said: ‘Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees’ (D&C 81:5).”

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, May 1995

Council chairs and co-chairs need to understand and be trained in their responsibilities which include:

1. Making all council members feel needed and important.
2. Understanding the ward's visions and goals as provided by the Bishop.

3. Implementing a program using all council members that will best serve ward members and others.
4. Accomplishing all the housekeeping responsibilities as assigned.
5. Understanding how to conduct a proper council meeting.
6. Understanding how to use an agenda. The agenda should include:
 - a. An opening hymn
 - b. Invocation
 - c. Spiritual thought
 - d. Training
 - e. Review of all previous assignments
 - f. New business
 - g. New assignments
 - h. Evaluation of the council's plan to improve lives of ward members
 - i. Concerns and ideas from council members
 - j. Closing prayer

The following are some helpful details:

1. The success of a council is measured by the participation of its council members.
2. The success of an activity is **not measured by the numbers** but by the needs which are met and by a positive experience of those in attendance.
3. The chair and co-chair should meet with each council member individually in order to establish a working relationship.
4. The chair and co-chair help council members understand the ward's vision and goals.
5. The chair and co-chair define a vision for their council. Then with all council members, they use that vision to create and implement a program that will serve the ward members and others. An appropriate scripture that reflects this vision may be used as a theme.
6. Members of the council can have a testimony-building experience as well as learn leadership principles when members serve together.
7. The primary job of the chair and co-chair is to involve council members. A good start is by giving them a chance to have input and be heard. They become part of a problem-solving team. We energize individuals when they feel ownership of the problem and are willing to become part of the solution. Therefore, the council's program has a greater possibility of success.
8. The council chair is responsible for planning and implementing a weekly council meeting. This meeting helps everyone keep focused on the council's vision or goal.
9. The chair and co-chair assign the weekly housekeeping responsibilities to every member of the council.
10. The chair and co-chair should be guided by the Spirit to bless the lives of council members and the people they serve.
11. Councils can work together with other councils to achieve small or large projects.

Appendix B

Gospel Teaching and Leadership Special Instructions

The Gospel Teaching and Leadership Council has an unusual responsibility. It is responsible for ALL teaching in the ward. All teachers are members of this council. It is comprised of the Sunday School teachers and the Relief Society and elders quorum instructors. As members of this council, each teacher has an association with other teachers allowing meaningful exchange of ideas and techniques.

Sunday School teachers are selected by the chair and co-chair of this council. The respective Relief Society and elders quorum presidents select their instructors during the ward organizational meeting. Relief Society instructors should be set apart by a member of the bishopric as both a Relief Society instructor and a member of the Gospel teaching and Leadership Council. Elders quorum instructors should be set apart by a member of the elders quorum presidency as an instructor specific to that quorum. Then, the instructor should be set apart by someone delegated by the bishop as a member of the Gospel Teaching and Leadership council.

The goal of this council is to improve gospel teaching throughout the ward. Lessons are taught from the respective manuals, i.e. Sunday School or Priesthood/Relief Society.

In the weekly council meetings, the chair and co-chair should lead discussion on how the council can teach more effectively in their various classes. Discussions and lessons should be taught from the manual *Teaching: No Greater Call*. Teachers must be trained to involve as many class members as possible in discussions by making assignments prior to the lesson. If possible, the assignments should be given one week in advance. Greater class participation will lead to more effective teaching and learning and a stronger influence of the Spirit.

The Sunday School president is the chair of this council. The co-chair may function as the teacher improvement coordinator.

Appendix C

How Leaders Direct Councils

1. The leader appoints a council member to record suggestions. The leader presents a clear picture or vision of the subject to be discussed. (This should be a short discussion with no opinions or solutions expressed by the leader.)
2. The leader begins by asking questions concerning the subject. He/she then actively listens to the council members and asks mean-influx questions when he/she does not understand their perspective or if he/she needs to keep the council focused. The leader generally does not answer questions that arise during discussion but redirects questions to council members for their response.
3. The leader discusses all suggestions presented by the council members and adds his/her own. If unanimity is not reached, the final decision remains with the council leader.
4. The leader carefully considers the members' suggestions then listens to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit to help him/her make a decision. Additional time to ponder and pray may be necessary to make a final decision. The leader then gives specific and clear assignments to council members. Members of the council return and report at an appointed time.

Notes

Notes

Selected Excerpts from *Counseling with Our Councils* by Elder M. Russell Ballard

“When Church leaders allow those whom the Lord has called to serve with them to become part of a problem-solving team, wonderful things begin to happen. We broaden our base of experience and understanding, which can't help but expose us to better and more insightful solutions. We energize individuals by giving them a chance to have input and to be heard. We prepare future leaders by allowing them to participate and learn. And when more people feel ownership of the problem, more people are willing to become part of the solution, which greatly enhances the possibility of success.” (Page 14)

“The leader comes to the council with, at the very least, a sense of vision... When a leader in the Church inspires council members with vision, he helps them focus on their real mission so that they are ministering to people rather than merely administering programs.” (Page 23)

“Thank goodness for the principle of revelation in the Church! But let us not underestimate the worth of input from council members in the deliberation process. This is part of the miracle of Church councils. By listening to each other and to the Spirit, council members can advance the work of the Lord in meaningful ways. And as we support one another and participate in Church councils, we begin to understand how God can take ordinary men and women and make of them extraordinary leaders. For the best leaders are not those who work themselves to death trying to do everything single-handedly; the best leaders are those who follow God's plan and counsel with their councils.” (Page 20)

“Remember, presidents and bishops, that the callings of your associates are just as divinely inspired as is yours, and they are therefore entitled to inspiration in their specific responsibilities. Lean upon them. Learn from them. Love them. Listen to them... Listen carefully to their counsel and consider their input, and then listen to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit as it leads you to make good decisions” (Page 68)

“If you're the presiding officer, that doesn't mean that you just sit there quietly. It means that you really listen to what your counselors and other council members are saying and feeling, and that you ask meaningful, penetrating questions when you don't understand their perspective. While it is true that final decisions and directions rest with the person who has been called to preside, there is little reason to have council members with unique insights, experiences, and abilities if you're not going to pay attention to what they have to say. Let your council members know that you value their input and that you expect them to express themselves. Since the presiding officer sets the tone in each meeting, it is up to you to make sure that those who serve under your direction feel that their participation is welcome. It is usually helpful to hear other opinions before offering your own. Too often, when a leader expresses his or her opinion first, the discussions conclude prematurely.” (Page 65)

“Sometimes we get so focused on bringing people to the meetinghouse that we forget we are supposed to be bringing them to Christ. Too often, our council meetings reflect that lack of focus. We find ourselves spending all of our precious time during council meetings coordinating events and correlating schedules. Instead of doing the Lord's business—which almost always has to do with touching the lives of individuals and families—we allow ourselves to get bogged down in administrative busyness.” (Page 71)

Elder Boyd K. Packer said:

“Sister, it is your duty to attend Relief Society, just as it is the duty of the brethren to attend their priesthood meeting... If you are absenting yourself from Relief Society because ‘you don't get anything out of it,’ tell me, dear sister, what is it that you are putting into it?” (*Memorable Stories and Parables*, pages 80-90)

YSA Service Councils Stake and Ward Organization

