

9.

Relief Society

The Relief Society is an auxiliary to the priesthood. All auxiliary organizations exist to help Church members grow in their testimonies of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel. Through the work of the auxiliaries, members receive instruction, encouragement, and support as they strive to live according to gospel principles.

9.1

Overview of Relief Society

9.1.1

Purposes

Relief Society helps prepare women for the blessings of eternal life as they increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement; strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants; and work in unity to help those in need. Relief Society accomplishes these purposes through Sunday meetings, other Relief Society meetings, service as ministering sisters, and welfare and compassionate service.

9.1.2

History

The Prophet Joseph Smith organized the Relief Society on March 17, 1842. He taught that the Relief Society was organized for “the relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and for the exercise of all benevolent purposes” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 452). In addition, he taught that the Relief Society was “not only to relieve the poor, but to save souls” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 453). The larger part of the work of Relief Society today is “to look after the spiritual welfare and salvation . . . of all the female members of the Church” (Joseph F. Smith,

in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 185).

The Relief Society was “divinely made, divinely authorized, divinely instituted, divinely ordained of God” (Joseph F. Smith, in *Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 184). It operates under the direction of priesthood leaders.

9.1.3

Motto and Seal

The Relief Society’s motto is “Charity never faileth” (1 Corinthians 13:8). This principle is reflected in its seal:



9.1.4

Membership

All adult women in the Church are members of Relief Society.

A young woman normally advances into Relief Society on her 18th birthday or in the coming year. By age 19, each young woman should be fully participating in Relief Society. Because of individual circumstances, such as personal testimony and maturity, school graduation, desire to continue with peers, and college attendance, a young woman may advance into Relief Society earlier than her 18th birthday or remain in Young Women longer. Each young woman counsels with her parents and the bishop to decide what will best help her remain an active participant in the Church.

Young Women and Relief Society leaders work together to make the transition into Relief Society successful for each young woman.

Adult sisters who serve in Primary, Young Women, or other callings that prevent them from attending

Sunday Relief Society meetings continue to be members of Relief Society. Ministering sisters are assigned to them, and they are assigned to serve others as ministering sisters. They may also be given assignments to provide compassionate service and to teach classes at other Relief Society meetings when such assignments do not impose an undue burden on them.

Women under 18 who are married are also members of Relief Society. For other exceptions, see 10.12.4.

Women of other faiths who attend Relief Society are warmly welcomed and encouraged to participate.

9.2

Ward Relief Society Leadership

This chapter focuses on administering the Relief Society in a way that will strengthen individuals, families, and homes. Relief Society leaders frequently review chapter 3, which outlines general principles of leadership. These principles include preparing spiritually, participating in councils, ministering to others, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

9.2.1

Bishopric

The bishop and his counselors provide priesthood leadership for the Relief Society.

The bishop calls and sets apart a sister to serve as Relief Society president. He oversees the calling and setting apart of counselors in the ward Relief Society presidency, the ward Relief Society secretary, and other sisters who serve in Relief Society callings. He may assign his counselors to call and set apart these sisters.

A member of the bishopric presents the Relief Society president and her counselors in a sacrament meeting for a sustaining vote of ward members. The bishop or one of his counselors presents sisters who

are called to other Relief Society callings, including secretary, in a Relief Society meeting for a sustaining vote (see 9.2.3–5).

The bishop meets with the Relief Society president regularly to discuss Relief Society and welfare matters.

9.2.2

Ward Relief Society Presidency

The Relief Society presidency consists of a president and two counselors. They are spiritual leaders in the effort to strengthen sisters and their families. They work under the direction of the bishopric. They also receive orientation and ongoing support from the stake Relief Society presidency.

9.2.2.1

Ward Relief Society President

The Relief Society president has the following responsibilities:

She serves as a member of the ward council. As a member of this council, she participates in efforts to build faith and strengthen individuals and families (see chapter 4).

She meets regularly with the bishop to report on and discuss Relief Society and welfare matters.

At the bishop's request, she visits homes of members to evaluate welfare needs and suggest ways to respond to them (see 9.6.1). In the absence of the Relief Society president, the bishop may assign a counselor in the Relief Society presidency to respond to an urgent need.

She submits recommendations to the bishopric for sisters to be called to serve as Relief Society leaders. She also submits recommendations for sisters to be called as teachers and to fulfill other callings in the Relief Society, as desired and needed. In making these recommendations, she follows the guidelines in 19.1.1 and 19.1.2.

She coordinates ward Relief Society welfare efforts during emergencies.

She teaches other Relief Society leaders and teachers their duties, using this handbook as a resource.

She oversees the records, reports, budget, and finances of the ward Relief Society. The Relief Society secretary helps with this responsibility.

9.2.2.2

Ward Relief Society President and Counselors

The Relief Society president and her counselors work together to fulfill the following responsibilities. The Relief Society president assigns her counselors to oversee some of these responsibilities. No more than two counselors may be called.

To facilitate priesthood-directed member missionary work and temple and family history work, the Relief Society presidency may follow the pattern of the elders quorum, with a member of the presidency assigned to help with member missionary work and another member of the presidency assigned to help with temple and family history work. The bishop may also assign the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies to lead activation and convert retention efforts in the ward (see 5.2.2; 5.3.1).

The presidency coordinates ministering efforts with the elders quorum presidency, organizes and oversees the service of ministering sisters, and holds ministering interviews.

They oversee efforts to improve gospel learning and teaching in the Relief Society. They participate in and encourage other leaders to participate in teacher council meetings (see 5.5.7). In these efforts, they follow the principles in 5.5.3 and 5.5.4.

Under the direction of the bishop and working with the elders quorum presidency, they plan ways to address welfare needs and to provide compassionate service (see 9.6 and chapter 6).

They plan and conduct Relief Society meetings.

They hold Relief Society presidency meetings.

They visit or meet with each Relief Society sister at least once a year. They discuss the well-being of the sister and her family. These meetings should not be combined with a ministering interview in which a companion is present.

The Relief Society president assigns one of her counselors to coordinate the Relief Society's efforts to help the young single adult sisters in the ward. If the ward has a young single adult committee, this counselor serves on the committee. (See 16.3.3 and 16.3.4.)

9.2.3

Ward Relief Society Secretary

The Relief Society secretary has the following responsibilities:

She consults with the Relief Society president to prepare agendas for presidency meetings. She attends these meetings, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

She may schedule ministering interviews for the Relief Society president and her counselors.

Each quarter, she compiles a report of Sunday meeting attendance and ministering interviews. She reviews this report with the Relief Society president and submits it to the ward clerk.

She ensures that the Relief Society presidency is aware of young women who will be entering Relief Society.

She assists the Relief Society presidency in preparing an annual budget and accounting for expenses.

9.2.4

Relief Society Teachers

Relief Society teachers teach doctrine and lead discussions as assigned by the Relief Society presidency. They follow the principles outlined in 5.5.4.

9.2.5**Other Ward Relief Society Callings**

The callings listed in this section are optional. The bishop and Relief Society president may decide not to fill every position, or they may determine that additional callings are needed. The Relief Society presidency recommends sisters to serve in these callings. If the bishop approves the recommendation, he or one of his counselors extends the callings. A member of the bishopric then presents the sisters in a Relief Society meeting for a sustaining vote.

9.2.5.1**Assistant Secretaries and Ministering Secretaries**

The Relief Society presidency may recommend calling one or more assistant secretaries to help with secretary responsibilities (see 9.2.3).

If the presidency needs additional help organizing ministering interviews and preparing the quarterly report (see 9.5), they may recommend to the bishop that one or more ministering secretaries be called. Ministering secretaries do not conduct ministering interviews.

9.2.5.2**Compassionate Service Coordinator and Assistants**

A sister may be called to help the Relief Society presidency identify needs and coordinate compassionate service. Assistants may also be called.

9.2.5.3**Relief Society Meeting Coordinator and Committee**

A sister may be called to help the Relief Society presidency coordinate the planning of Relief Society meetings that are not held on Sunday. These meetings may include service, classes, projects,

conferences, and workshops. The Relief Society presidency may request that committee members be called to assist the coordinator. Committee members may be given specific areas of responsibility.

9.2.5.4**Other Callings and Assignments**

As needed, the Relief Society presidency may assign or recommend calling sisters to help accomplish the work of salvation. For example, they may counsel with the bishop about calling sisters to assist with strengthening young single adults, doing temple and family history work, and sharing the gospel. Sisters with short-term assignments do not need to be called and set apart. Sisters who lead or serve in long-term assignments are called and set apart by a member of the bishopric.

9.3**Leadership Meetings****9.3.1****Ward Council Meeting**

The Relief Society president serves as a member of the ward council (see chapter 4). Counselors in the Relief Society presidency may be invited to attend ward council meetings as needed.

9.3.2**Ward Relief Society Presidency Meeting**

The Relief Society presidency holds a presidency meeting regularly. The president presides at the meeting and conducts it. The secretary attends, takes notes, and keeps track of assignments.

The agenda may include the following items:

1. Plan ways to organize, teach, and inspire sisters in the work of Relief Society.

2. Review counsel and assignments from the bishop, including assignments from ward council meetings. Plan ways to follow the counsel and fulfill the assignments.
3. Discuss efforts related to missionary work and temple and family history work in the ward. Plan ways to accomplish this work.
4. Plan ways to help Relief Society sisters and their families meet welfare needs. This may include planning compassionate service.
5. Review information from ministering interviews about efforts to watch over and minister to Relief Society sisters and their families. Give special attention to the needs of new Church members in Relief Society, single adult sisters, and young single adult sisters.
6. Plan Sunday Relief Society meetings and other Relief Society meetings and discuss ways to improve them.
7. Consider sisters to be called to serve in Relief Society, and prepare recommendations for the Relief Society president to share with the bishopric. Also consider sisters to ask to help with short-term assignments.

9.3.3

Stake Relief Society Leadership Meeting

Stake Relief Society leadership meeting is generally held once a year, as explained in 18.3.11. Ward Relief Society presidencies and secretaries attend. Others with Relief Society callings may be invited to attend as needed.

9.4

Ward Relief Society Meetings

9.4.1

Sunday Relief Society Meetings

Relief Society meetings are held on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. They last 50 minutes. In these meetings, women learn doctrines and principles of the gospel that will help them increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those in need. A member of the Relief Society presidency conducts these meetings.

Sunday Relief Society meetings begin with a brief welcome, a reminder of the *Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* home study materials for that day and the following week, and any Relief Society business. The remainder of the meeting is used for gospel instruction and discussion.

Lessons in Sunday Relief Society meetings focus on messages from the most recent general conference. Teaching suggestions are found in the May and November issues of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*, on ChurchofJesusChrist.org, and in the Gospel Library app.

First-Sunday council meetings are discontinued. However, as needed, Relief Societies may use part of a Sunday meeting to counsel about a specific topic.

Relief Society meetings do not begin with a hymn or prayer, but they conclude with a prayer. Hymns may be used to enhance a lesson as appropriate.

Relief Society sisters and young women do not meet together for opening exercises but gather in their respective meetings.

9.4.2

Additional Relief Society Meetings

To supplement the instruction in Sunday meetings, Relief Society sisters may participate in additional

meetings. These may include service, classes, projects, conferences, and workshops. In these meetings, sisters learn and accomplish the charitable and practical responsibilities of the Relief Society. They learn and practice skills that will help them increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen their families and make their homes centers of spiritual strength, and help those in need. They learn and apply principles of provident living and spiritual and temporal self-reliance. They also increase in sisterhood and unity as they teach one another and serve together.

All Relief Society sisters, including those who serve in Young Women and Primary and those who do not actively participate in the Church, are invited to attend. Sisters may also invite their friends of other faiths.

Sisters should not be made to feel that attendance at these meetings is mandatory.

The Relief Society president oversees all Relief Society meetings. As part of this responsibility, she counsels regularly with the bishop about how the meetings can help meet the needs of individuals and families in the ward.

Although the Relief Society president oversees the meetings, she does not need to attend all of them. However, at least one member of the Relief Society presidency should be in attendance at every meeting.

9.4.2.1

Frequency and Location of the Meetings

The Relief Society presidency prayerfully considers how often they should hold additional Relief Society meetings and where they should hold them. When they have made a decision, the Relief Society president seeks approval from the bishop.

These meetings are usually held at a time other than on Sunday or on Monday evening. They are generally held monthly, but the Relief Society presidency

may recommend that they be held more often or less often. Efforts should be made to meet at least quarterly.

In determining the frequency, location, and length of additional meetings, the bishop and Relief Society presidency consider time commitments of sisters, family circumstances, travel distance and cost, financial cost to the ward, safety, and other local circumstances.

9.4.2.2

Planning the Meetings

Relief Society leaders prayerfully counsel together about the topics that will strengthen sisters and their families and about the best ways to teach those topics.

The Relief Society president ensures that plans for all Relief Society meetings are approved by the bishop. She also ensures that all plans are in accordance with the guidelines in chapter 13.

Although the Relief Society president oversees these meetings, she may ask one of her counselors to assume the responsibility for planning them and carrying them out. She may also recommend that another sister be called as Relief Society meeting coordinator to fulfill this responsibility (see 9.2.5).

Meetings may focus on one topic or be divided into more than one class or activity. Generally, teachers should be members of the ward or stake. Each year, one meeting may commemorate the founding of the Relief Society and focus on its history and purposes.

In planning these meetings, Relief Society leaders give special attention to topics that the bishop has asked them to address to help meet local needs.

Leaders also give priority to the following topics:

Marriage and family: preparing for marriage and family, strengthening marriages, motherhood, early childhood education, preparing youth for future responsibilities, encouraging and

preparing for home evening, and strengthening extended family relationships.

Homemaking: learning and improving skills for the care of the home and family, such as cleaning and organizing, home beautification, cooking, and sewing.

Self-reliance and provident living: finances (budgeting, debt relief, and employment qualifications); education and literacy (studying the scriptures and learning the gospel, teaching others to read, tutoring children and youth, choosing children’s literature, using computers and other technology, and developing cultural awareness); health (physical health, fitness, addiction prevention and recovery, social and emotional health, and preventing illness); gardening; food production and storage; and emergency preparedness.

Compassionate service: care of the sick, elderly, homebound, disabled, and poor and needy; support for new mothers and babies; and humanitarian and community aid.

Temple and family history: collecting and preserving family history information, writing family histories, preparing for the temple, and doing temple work.

Sharing the gospel: member missionary efforts, fellowshipping new and less-active members, neighborhood outreach, activation and retention, welcoming new sisters into Relief Society, and preparing for full-time missions.

9.4.2.3

Children’s Class

A children’s class may be held to allow mothers of young children to attend meetings held on days other than Sunday. With the approval of the bishopric, the Relief Society presidency asks Relief Society sisters or other ward members to supervise and teach this class. If Relief Society sisters teach the class, the Relief Society presidency rotates this

responsibility so all the sisters can have the opportunity to attend the meetings. If men teach the class, the Relief Society presidency follows the guidelines in 11.8.1.

Teachers for the children’s class plan age-appropriate activities that teach children about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. They may use Primary manuals and other Primary materials to teach the children.

If food is provided in the children’s class, leaders first consult with the parents of each child about any dietary restrictions due to conditions such as diabetes or allergies.

9.5

Ministering

The Savior showed by example what it means to minister as He served out of love for His Father and for His Father’s children (see John 15:9–10). He loved, taught, prayed for, comforted, and blessed those around Him, inviting all to follow Him (see Mark 8:34). Ministering sisters prayerfully seek to serve as He would. To provide such care, each adult sister has ministering sisters assigned to watch over her.

Members of the Relief Society presidency instruct ministering sisters on how to care for, watch over, remember, and strengthen one another. Presidency members can give this instruction in a ministering interview, in a Sunday meeting, or in another Relief Society meeting.

Ministering sisters are not sustained or set apart.

9.5.1

Responsibilities of Ministering Sisters

Ministering sisters represent the Lord, the bishop, and Relief Society leaders. As sisters minister, they prayerfully seek to serve as the Lord would, “comfort[ing] those that stand in need of comfort”

and helping each become a true disciple of Jesus Christ (Mosiah 18:9; see also John 13:35).

Ministering sisters seek to be led by the Spirit as they provide Christlike caring. They counsel with those they are assigned and seek inspiration about how best to meet their needs, using the time and resources available.

Ministering sisters are flexible in how they minister. They customize their contacts and service, and any messages, to meet the needs of sisters. Personal visits are important when they can be made. Ministering sisters may also reach out through phone calls, texts, emails, letters, contacts at church, attendance at family events, and service.

Meeting individual needs starts with prayerful consideration and with a conversation with the assigned sisters. Ministering sisters listen so they can understand how best to serve. They discuss the frequency and type of contact sisters desire. They also discuss the kind of messages sisters would like.

Ministering sisters can be an important source of help to those they serve. Some ways are listed below:

1. They help sisters strengthen their faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.
2. They help sisters and their families prepare for their next ordinance. They may help parents ensure that their children are blessed, baptized, and confirmed. They may also help parents ensure that their sons have the Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon them and are ordained to priesthood offices at the appropriate ages.
3. They become acquainted with sisters' interests and needs, and they recognize special events in their lives.
4. They offer help when sisters and their families are unemployed, ill, lonely, moving, or have other needs.
5. They help sisters and their families become self-reliant.

9.5.2

Coordinating Ministering

Ministering is a coordinated effort between the elders quorum and the Relief Society. Working under the direction of the bishop, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies prayerfully coordinate ministering as follows:

1. The elders quorum presidency recommends to the bishop ministering companionships and ministering assignments for the individuals and families of the ward. The Relief Society presidency recommends ministering companionships and ministering assignments for Relief Society sisters. Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies discuss specific assignments before recommending them to the bishop.
2. As appropriate, the ministering brothers and sisters of an individual or family may discuss together their efforts to meet needs. When necessary, they may contact their quorum or Relief Society presidencies for additional help and resources.
3. Members of the Relief Society presidency hold interviews with ministering sisters at least quarterly (see 9.5.4).
4. Elders quorum and Relief Society presidencies meet together at least quarterly to discuss the strengths and needs of individuals and families learned through ministering interviews. Elders quorum and Relief Society presidents share in the responsibility of organizing and conducting the meeting. As needed, the presidencies work together to coordinate ministering assignments.
5. Following that meeting, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents meet together quarterly with the bishop to address the needs

of individuals and families. They may also discuss changes in ministering assignments and obtain the bishop's approval for their recommendations.

6. As needed, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents discuss with the ward council the strengths and needs identified in ministering interviews. Members of the ward council make plans to serve and bless ward members.

9.5.3

Organizing Ministering to Meet Local Needs

The Relief Society presidency prayerfully recommends to the bishop assignments for ministering sisters to care for the sisters in the ward. Presidency members discuss the strengths and needs of sisters and their families. They recommend dedicated ministering sisters for new members, less-active members who may be receptive, and others such as single mothers and widows.

After the bishop has given approval, a member of the Relief Society presidency meets with ministering sisters to give them their assignments and to counsel about the strengths, needs, and challenges of those to whom the sisters minister. This conversation may take place in a ministering interview or whenever needed.

The Relief Society presidency normally assigns sisters into companionships of two. A married couple may be assigned to minister together, if that would most effectively meet the needs of a sister and her family.

Mia Maids and Laurels may serve as companions to Relief Society sisters. Parents and leaders counsel with each Mia Maid and Laurel, and she may be assigned as a ministering sister when she is willing and able to serve. A member of the Relief Society presidency extends ministering assignments to Mia Maids and Laurels.

A Mia Maid or Laurel serving as a companion to an adult sister does not have ministering sisters assigned specifically to her. She is ministered to by those who minister to her family and is also cared for by her Young Women leaders.

The guideline that two responsible adults be present with youth does not apply to the assignment of ministering companions. However, under the direction of their bishop, leaders should use wisdom and seek inspiration when assigning youth as companions to adults.

Adult companions should avoid situations that might be misunderstood. They should exercise care regarding isolated one-on-one situations so that youth have a safe and rewarding experience with ministering. Additionally, leaders should use wisdom in not assigning youth to difficult home or family situations.

When youth are assigned to a companion who is not a parent, leaders should confirm that parents do not object to the assignment.

With approval from the mission president, leaders may consider asking full-time missionaries to help with ministering on a limited basis. The mission president communicates this approval to the stake president, who informs bishops. When such approval is given, full-time missionaries are assigned primarily to minister to new members, part-member families, and less-active members.

9.5.4

Ministering Interviews

Members of the Relief Society presidency hold interviews with ministering sisters (including Mia Maids and Laurels) at least once each quarter. Interviews may be held throughout the quarter and need not be long to be effective.

Preferably, these interviews are held in person and with both members of the companionship. A married couple assigned to minister together can

meet with elders quorum leaders, Relief Society leaders, or both.

Ministering interviews are held to:

1. Counsel about the strengths, needs, and challenges of assigned sisters and their families.
2. Determine what needs the elders quorum, Relief Society, or ward council might assist with.
3. Teach and encourage ministering sisters.

Between interviews, ministering sisters communicate information as needed—in person or through phone calls, texts, or emails. They share confidential information only with the Relief Society president or directly with the bishop.

Each quarter, the elders quorum and Relief Society presidents meet together with the bishop to address the needs of individuals and families. As needed, they also coordinate ministering assignments. The elders quorum or Relief Society president reports urgent needs to the bishop immediately.

9.6

Welfare and Compassionate Service

Welfare and compassionate service are central to the work of Relief Society.

Under the bishop's direction, the Relief Society and elders quorum presidencies share the following welfare responsibilities:

They teach principles of temporal and spiritual self-reliance.

They care for the poor and needy and encourage members to give service.

They help individuals and families become self-reliant and find solutions to short-term and long-term welfare concerns.

For more information on these welfare responsibilities, see chapter 6.

The following sections outline responsibilities that apply specifically to the Relief Society president and her counselors.

9.6.1

Family-Needs Visits

The bishop normally assigns the Relief Society president to visit members who need welfare assistance so she can evaluate their needs and suggest ways to respond to them. If there is not a woman in a home she visits, she takes one of her counselors, the Relief Society secretary, or the compassionate service coordinator with her.

To prepare for a family-needs visit, the Relief Society president considers information the bishop provides about the family and seeks guidance from the Lord.

The Relief Society president evaluates the family's resources and prepares an itemized list of the family's basic food and clothing needs. She gives this list to the bishop. She also may prepare a Bishop's Order for Commodities form for the bishop to review and approve. She provides this service with sensitivity and understanding, helping those who receive assistance to maintain their self-respect and dignity.

The Relief Society president reports to the bishop on the general condition of the family. She reports any needs in the areas of food (for normal needs but not for food storage), clothing, home management, health, and social and emotional well-being. She also may share her assessment of family members' work capabilities and the opportunities family members have for work.

The bishop helps the family develop a self-reliance plan. He also counsels with the Relief Society president regarding additional opportunities to help the family. In some cases, the most valuable assistance

may include (1) helping a sister manage income and resources and (2) teaching homemaking skills such as cleaning, sewing, organizing, planning menus, preserving food, and promoting good health.

The Relief Society president and anyone who assists her keep strictly confidential any information they obtain during the visit or from the bishop.

9.6.2

Compassionate Service

All Relief Society sisters have a responsibility to be conscious of the needs of others. They use their time, skills, talents, spiritual and emotional support, and prayers of faith to help others.

Through the help of ministering sisters and others in the ward, the Relief Society presidency identifies those who have special needs because of old age, physical or emotional illness, emergencies, births, deaths, disability, loneliness, and other challenges. The Relief Society president reports her findings to the bishop. Under his direction, she coordinates assistance. She assesses the skills and circumstances of all sisters as she determines who may be able to help.

She may ask a counselor, a compassionate service coordinator, or ministering sisters to help coordinate these service efforts. She may also form a committee to help. Sisters can assist by providing meals, providing child care or home care, helping individual sisters improve literacy skills, providing transportation for needed medical assistance, and responding to other needs.

9.6.3

Literacy

The ability to read and write helps members find employment and develop temporal self-reliance. It also helps them increase in their gospel knowledge and spiritual self-reliance. Each ward implements literacy efforts according to its needs and resources.

When basic literacy skills are lacking among members, the Relief Society presidency works with the bishop and ward council to identify practical ways to help members improve these skills. Assigned leaders and teachers may use the Church's literacy course, which includes the *Ye Shall Have My Words* student manual and teacher's manual and a DVD for training teachers. In addition, Relief Society leaders may devote some meetings to literacy skills.

9.7

Strengthening Young Relief Society Sisters

9.7.1

Working with the Young Women Presidency

The transition from youth to womanhood is a defining time in the life of a young woman. The Relief Society presidency works with the Young Women presidency to determine ways to support parents in their efforts to help young women successfully make the transition to Relief Society.

The following suggestions may help in this effort:

Mia Maids and Laurels may serve as companions to Relief Society sisters in ministering assignments.

Young women and Relief Society sisters may occasionally plan an activity together.

Relief Society sisters may be asked to assist individual young women who need support in completing Personal Progress and remaining active in the Church.

The Relief Society president may visit Young Women classes and present a preview of Relief Society.

9.7.2**Responsibility for Young Single Adult Sisters**

The Relief Society presidency has a responsibility to look after young single adult sisters. Relief Society leaders teach young single adult sisters the purposes of Relief Society and give them opportunities to participate in the work of Relief Society. They give young single adult sisters assignments to serve as ministering sisters. Relief Society leaders may also give them other meaningful opportunities to serve and may recommend them to receive callings to serve in the Relief Society.

The Relief Society presidency recommends to the bishop ministering sisters for each young single adult sister. If a young single adult sister lives with her parents, the Relief Society presidency counsels with her about whether she should have her own ministering sisters or if her mother's ministering sisters should serve her as well.

9.7.3**Separate Relief Society Class for Young Single Adult Sisters**

If sufficient numbers of young single adult sisters reside in a ward, the bishop may authorize the organization of a separate Relief Society class for some Sunday discussions and occasional activities. If a sister in the ward is serving as a young single adult leader (see 16.3.3), she may serve as the class leader. Discussions are led by members of the class, who consult with the Relief Society presidency and focus on the needs of young sisters. They use the scriptures, teachings of latter-day prophets, and other Church-approved materials for Relief Society.

9.8**Stake Relief Society Leadership****9.8.1****Stake Presidency**

The stake president oversees the Relief Society in the stake. He meets regularly (usually monthly) with the stake Relief Society president or presidency. He provides priesthood direction as they counsel together about matters that pertain to Relief Society sisters and their families. These matters may include welfare needs, the progress and needs of sisters in the stake, and Relief Society meetings, instruction, and activities.

For more information about the stake presidency's responsibilities relating to auxiliary organizations, see 15.1.

9.8.2**Stake Relief Society Presidency**

The responsibilities of stake auxiliary presidencies are outlined in 15.4.1. The stake Relief Society presidency also has the following responsibilities:

Under the direction of the stake presidency, they may plan and carry out one or two stake Relief Society meetings each year for all Relief Society sisters in the stake. These meetings may include service, classes, projects, conferences, and workshops. They should not be held in conjunction with the women's session of general conference. The stake Relief Society presidency may form committees to help as needed. Occasionally these activities may include young women and girls ages 8 and older. The stake Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary presidencies counsel together to recommend such activities to the stake presidency.

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency ensure that ward Relief Society presidents understand welfare principles and that they understand their role to help bishops in welfare matters.

Members of the stake Relief Society presidency assist young single adult sisters in the stake. If the stake has a young single adult committee, a member of the presidency serves on the committee (see 16.3.2).

The stake Relief Society president supervises stake Relief Society welfare efforts. She also coordinates stake Relief Society efforts during emergencies.

9.8.3

Stake Relief Society Secretary

The responsibilities of the stake Relief Society secretary are outlined in 15.4.2.

9.9

Adapting the Relief Society Organization to Local Needs

The following guidelines are provided to help wards and stakes adapt the Relief Society organization to local needs. For general information about adapting to local needs, see chapter 17.

9.9.1

More Than One Relief Society in a Ward

In special circumstances, the bishop and stake president may authorize creating more than one Relief Society in a ward. Special circumstances might include wards with nursing homes, young single adult wards, wards with a large number of single mothers and widows, wards with a large number of active members of Relief Society, and wards that encompass large geographic areas. The intent of creating more than one Relief Society is to facilitate watching over and strengthening the sisters and their families.

In a ward with more than one Relief Society, the leaders in each Relief Society presidency administer the full Relief Society program for their

membership. Each Relief Society should have a balance of sisters in terms of age and experience. Each Relief Society president has an equal voice in ward council meetings and works individually with the bishop concerning welfare matters and efforts to strengthen the sisters and their families.

9.9.2

Relief Society in Small Units

In a small ward or branch, the Relief Society presidency may be the only Relief Society leaders and teachers. In a very small unit, the Relief Society president may be the only Relief Society leader. Counselors, a secretary, teachers, and others listed in this chapter should be called when possible.

In a very small branch that does not have a Young Women president or Primary president, the Relief Society president may help parents organize instruction for the young women and children until Young Women and Primary presidents are called.

In a small stake or a district, the Relief Society president may be the only stake or district Relief Society leader. When possible, counselors and a secretary should be called.

9.10

Additional Guidelines and Policies

9.10.1

Sisters Who Have Special Needs

Sisters who may have special needs include those who are ill, elderly, widowed, divorced, homebound, or bereaved and those who care for chronically ill family members. Other Relief Society members should offer help.

Sisters who have these and other special challenges may come to the Relief Society president with their concerns. She should listen, offer love and encouragement, and maintain appropriate confidentiality.

If she learns of possible concerns with worthiness or sensitive family matters, she refers the sisters to the bishop.

For information about helping sisters with disabilities, see 21.1.26 and disabilities.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.

9.10.2 Dress Standards

The Relief Society presidency teaches sisters to be well groomed and modest in their attire. Presidency members help sisters understand that at Church meetings, their appearance and clothing should show reverence and respect for the Lord. Relief Society leaders also help sisters understand that when they go to the temple, they should wear clothing that is suitable for entering the house of the Lord. On these occasions they should avoid wearing casual clothes, sports attire, and ostentatious jewelry.

9.10.3 Offering Support at Times of Death

When a death occurs in the ward, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to contact the family to give comfort, assess needs, and offer assistance. He may request similar assistance from the elders quorum president. Elders quorum and Relief Society leaders coordinate these efforts.

In preparing for a funeral, the bishop may also ask Relief Society leaders to give service such as helping with flowers, meals, or care of children and providing a simple meal for family members after the funeral service. For additional information about funerals, see 18.6.

If possible, deceased members who were endowed should be buried in temple clothing. In some circumstances, the bishop may ask the Relief Society president to assign an endowed woman to dress or oversee the proper dressing of a deceased endowed

woman. The bishop and Relief Society president ensure that this assignment is given to a person who will not find it objectionable. For additional instructions on dressing the deceased in temple clothing, the bishop may refer to *Handbook 1*, 3.5.9.

The Relief Society president, ministering sisters, and other sisters continue to offer support, comfort, and assistance to the bereaved during the period of adjustment following the death.

9.10.4 Young Women Who Are Pregnant out of Wedlock or Who Are Unwed Mothers

See 10.12.4.

9.10.5 Instructions about Temple Clothing and Garments

See 21.1.42.

9.10.6 Finances

See 13.2.8.