

## General Counsel for Bishops -- from Other LDS Therapists

*We have made many attempts at LDS Family Services to create a basic counseling guideline for Bishops to help them decide when to refer. For some the guide has been helpful, but for others it seems to confuse and in some cases encourage them to engage in psychotherapy for which they may not be qualified. Their role is to seek out the poor and needy as a spiritual guide and support.*

*Our current and most successful approach at keeping Bishops informed and easing their burden of knowing when and to whom to refer is to provide a 24 hour 7 day a week help line. In that way any Bishop with a specific issue can call and receive help custom tailored to his particular issues.*

*Last month in our LDS Family Services office we took 201 such calls of which 109 were referred to a community provider (LDS Member in Private Practice) and 92 were handled in house. You can see the majority of the remaining clinical referrals (twice as many) went to our community providers.*

*So the benefit to church leaders and community providers is that LDS FS can authorize and pay staff to answer those calls 24/7 (calls that do not generate income) and then customize the referral after the sometimes lengthy one-on-one consultation.*

*The key is for your local office to be aware off all LDS FS vetted counselors and to work with them to ensure that those referred by LDS FS receive the same treatment options--including involving the Bishop when the client desires and signs a release.*

~D.A., LDS Family Services

~~~~~

*Speaking from 20 years of experience as an LCSW, bishops generally do learn to ask about their specific situations and specific needs, which is preferable most times to them using a general resource, which may or may not help the family or person in need.*

*For example, since everything is so case- specific (i.e. suicidal thoughts in a 12 y/o vs. suicidal thoughts in a 35 y/o married woman with post partum depression) it is usually best for bishops to consult with LDS Family Services or an LDS professional. I do consult with bishops over the phone quite a bit. Of course one doesn't have any control over how the bishop may use the resources we give them.*

*I do tend to share articles or give actual referrals on a case by case basis, which is really how I prefer to go. I had a sexual abuse case that the Bishop didn't ask me about because of the confidentiality clergy privilege. I heard about it from the wife who suspected the abuse. The Bishop had given the man the 800# to call to report abuse, but of course there was no way he was going to turn himself in. I had to get involved in a round about way and help the mom not only get resources for her daughter, but to also get her daughter safe. Not easy when dad decides to minimize the abuse (usual behavior) and the child is afraid to speak up against her father. It's moments like this where it makes me nervous for bishops to just have some "resources" on hand regarding sexual abuse, give it to a father or a mother and call it "done."*

*Lastly, most LDS Family Services offices have a list of community resources that bishops can utilize as well. I do try to share articles, books, websites, etc. with bishops I've worked with to help them learn about things they are dealing with (i.e. pornography issues) and to provide resources they may want to share with their members.*

~ M.S. LCSW

~~~~~

*I would suggest that having bishops use direct consultation with counselors is more effective in addressing case-specific needs, and I know most local LDS Family Services offices typically have a list of approved resources for bishops to use. As far as books, workshops, websites, etc. most bishops have too little time as it is to read and/or become experts on all the issues they may face.*

*So, regarding the question of when to refer members out to professionals, I'm biased in that I think people should generally stick with what they know and do best, which means for relational and mental health issues, almost anyone who comes to a Bishop for anything more than spiritual guidance and counsel, really probably should be referred out.*

*It does seem to me that the Church is swinging the other way lately though, asking bishops to take on more themselves and refer out less probably in an effort to save money. At least, that seems to be the case in my area. But, each bishop will of course interpret things differently.*

~ C.F., LCSW

~~~~~

*Bishops are encouraged to guide and support and counsel on spiritual matters. Their time is extremely important. Their first step should be to refer out to trusted counselors. When a bishop has any individual with an issue that requires regular meetings, or contacts them on a regular basis those individuals should be referred out to a specialist. This is true with any addiction, sexual issue, or emotional issue.*

*Unfortunately, there are many bishops who believe that they need to do it all as a way of magnifying their calling. My encouragement is to reserve their time for their family and the majority of the ward and allow the counselors to provide the therapy services that are needed.*

~ E.H. LMFT

~~~~~

*It seems to me that the best thing is not to teach bishops how to be counselors, but teach them how to recognize the signs of when a member of their ward needs professional help, and then who their best resources are in their area.*

~ S.Z. MFT

~~~~~

Dear Bishops,

Recently I had the opportunity to share some helpful ideas at a Stake's Bishops Welfare meeting. As a private practice counselor I thought I'd share the main points from that presentation, and share with you some additional resources beyond what you may receive from LDS Family Services.

Much of the role of a Bishop and a Counselor are similar. Here are some reasons you may find the assistance of a professional to be helpful:

- When a Bishop has no experience and is not familiar with the problem or situation of the member(s).
- When there is a significant imbalance in the couple's relationship. i.e. when one member of a couple appears to be in harmony and is temple worthy and the spouse or other family member is not and are on obviously different spiritual levels.
- It may be helpful to either consult with the stake president or LDS Family Services or refer out to other helping professionals may when Bishops may feel a stupor of thought not knowing how to proceed.

As a licensed hypnotherapist as well, I have dealt with a wide variety of issues and am happy to consult with local bishops for free. This offer has not been abused so I am happy to help if needed.

Additional Resources for Education and Support:

1. Free Date Night Free couples class (see CommunicatingLove.com). Offices in Meridian, Idaho.
2. Group Education opportunities on Addiction, Pornography, Stress reduction, etc. Call or visit [www.CommunicatingLove.com](http://www.CommunicatingLove.com) for details, times and places.

Rod Limb, LPC, MFT  
 208-887-6283  
 Meridian, Idaho  
[www.TheLifestyleAlliance.com](http://www.TheLifestyleAlliance.com)  
[www.CommunicatingLove.com](http://www.CommunicatingLove.com)

~~~~~

Support Team Involvement in Repentance Process			
	Bishop	Victims, Spouse, etc	Therapist
recognition of sin	X		
remorse for sin	X		
confession	X	X	
asking forgiveness	X	X	
restitution	X	X	
forsaking the sin	X		X
new habits	X		X

**What Bishops need to know:**

- *A Bishop's inspiration takes precedence over any other advice, counsel, programs, books, etc.*
- *Be aware of your own feelings regarding pornography, etc. being careful not to confuse your personal feelings with inspiration.*
- *Love the sinner, despise the sin.*
- *Pornography addiction is not just a sexual sin, but a spiritual issue and self-esteem problem.*
- *Guilt (Godly sorrow) moves a person forward, causing them to change, to repent. Shame ("You are bad" rather than "You've done something bad") doesn't inspire people to change. It only makes things worse because it reinforces their negative thinking, and increases the stress in his/her life, which increases the likelihood of slip ups/regression. Shame stagnates a person, causing him/her to withdraw, to isolate, to spin in negative/downward vicious cycles. Guilt and shame are often confused.*
- *Any positive spiritual behavior is good, e.g. reading scriptures, praying, serving others, etc. -- the more the better. Encourage all you can.*

K.M., PhD, BYU