

## Serving in a Family History Center

A Family History Center is a branch of the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Library, located in Salt Lake City, Utah, is the largest genealogical library in the world and provides access to many collections of records. Research of these records is motivated by doctrine in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that teaches that marriage and families can continue beyond this life. This can happen when families are united and sealed together for all eternity in one of the Lord's holy temples.

When Christ organized His Church anciently, it included vicarious work for the dead and the practice of performing ordinances for deceased relatives "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" ([1 Corinthians 15:29](#)). Christ's restoration of his original Church to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith included the ancient practice of performing these ordinances for deceased relatives in holy temples.

Family history research is the essential forerunner of temple work for deceased ancestors. We are obligated to correctly identify our ancestors by providing accurate information so these temple ordinances can be performed for our kindred dead. Our ancestors are taught the gospel in the spirit world where they have the choice to accept or reject the work performed for them.

In addition to our main library, there are more than 4,800 local family history centers worldwide, often located inside the Church meetinghouses. Their purpose is to teach people how to search for their ancestors. They are staffed by local Church members and others who volunteer their time, and all these services are provided free of charge.

Family history centers give members of the Church and the surrounding community access to family history resources, the Church's genealogical records and affiliate sources. Centers can train members and consultants in how to use family history resources.

Temple and Family history work is one of the four focuses of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and part of the plan of salvation.

Attending a Family History Center is regarded with the same attitude of reverence we have when entering into a sacred temple of the Church. Please leave concerns about worldly things outside.

Serving as a staff member under the direction of Family History center directors proves an environment to review policies, computer programs, resources and skill training. A long term commitment and frequent experiences and staff training meetings enable staff members to become "research" and resource specialists.

When there is no one present to serve in the center, is the time to practice. Drill just like soldiers do when they are not in battle.

Here are some goals upon which to focus drills:

1. Improve an understanding of the basic principles and steps of family history research.
2. Use the basic resources, publications, and equipment in the center.
3. Review how to help patrons and members feel welcome and use the basic resources.
4. Review how to help patrons transfer information to and from FamilySearch Family Tree.
5. Review how to do a data entry into personal computer software. (Encourage following the guidelines in "General Standards for Preparing & Submitting Names to the Temple".)
6. Review how to document sources when preparing names to submit for ordinances. Use at least one document source such as a birth certificate that provides evidence of that person's life and relationship to other family members.

7. Review how to search for someone in FamilySearch.org. Describe the different databases being searched.
8. Review how to prepare and process an ancestor's name for temple ordinances.
9. Review how to use information in the Wiki research guides and "A Guide to Research."
10. Review how to search the Family History Library catalog and other research aids.
11. Exchange teaching ideas specific to the members in your Church unit.
12. Register and participate in <http://www.familysearchindexing.org/>

A center staff member wrote "When I started actively doing genealogy almost 20 years ago, I could do little else than unlock the door." I took the following steps:

- I attended staff training meetings.
- I showed up for my shifts.
- I sought out others, introduced myself, told them that I was new at the FHC, and asked them if they would mind explaining what they were doing. No one ever turned me down. I learned a lot and helped a little.
- Even if no one came to the FHC during my shift, I only worked on my own genealogy during my shift to learn how to use the software and research tools. My own research was not allowed to overshadow my learning.
- I pulled books, periodicals, film, and fiche from the shelf/drawer and looked at them to see how they might be of value to a patron.
- I practiced loading and focusing on our film & fiche machines.
- I studied the training materials and asked questions of those serving at the FHC with me.
- As time permitted, I practiced the recorded step-by-step opening and closing procedures for the computer. I familiarized myself with available software programs and premium web sites.
- I volunteered to assist in projects that broadened my horizons.
- I attended classes, conferences and workshops to broaden my experience.
- I participated in group events organized by my FHC director where we traveled to local repositories. Going with a group gave me the support I needed to get to the point that I could have efficient and successful local research trips.
- One time I even saved up the money to travel all the way to SLC with a group to do research.
- I went to the FHC on my own time to input my work & do research. Shift time was devoted to others.

Our FHC staff trainer functioned more as a training coordinator than a trainer. In addition to one-on-one training, she coordinated the lessons to be presented at our monthly FHC staff meetings. She chose topics that would be useful to us, and then asked various staff members to teach them. As needed, she was the mentor and chief go-to person to assist the person in preparing their topic.

Generally, she assigned an unfamiliar topic so that the presenter would expand his/her knowledge. By organizing our training thusly, if a staff member attended every single monthly staff meeting for one year, it was the equivalent of attending two full days at a genealogy conference.

A few minutes of each meeting were devoted to technical operations issues, such as a change in opening/closing procedures. Written directions were placed in a notebook in the FHC for consultation.

Learning is a personal responsibility. It is helpful when experienced people share, but we can still learn on our own.

# Helping Patrons—Quick Reference Guide

## **Step 1: Help Patrons Feel Welcome**

Greet patrons, giving them your full attention and letting them know you are there to serve them.

## **Step 2: Assess Patrons' Needs**

Because every patron will have a particular reason for coming to the center, you should make every effort to identify his or her specific need. Ask questions and listen to determine how you can best help.

### **Questioning**

Start with open-ended questions. For example, you could ask: How can I help you today? What information have you brought with you? What can you remember about your grandfather?

Then use close-ended questions to narrow down or clarify patrons' needs. Examples are: "What is your mother's maiden name? Do you know how to use the library catalog? What year did your grandfather die?"

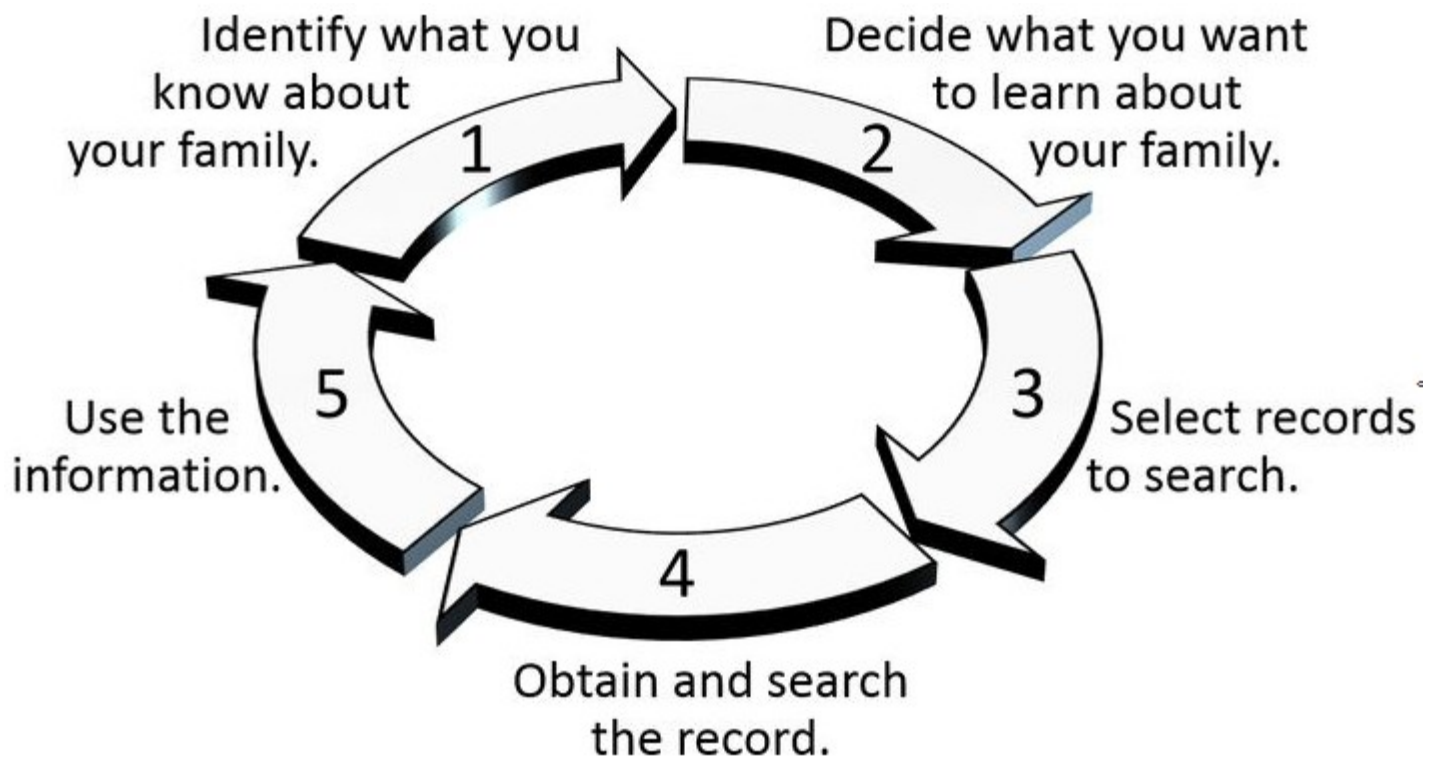
### **Listening**

Listen carefully to patrons' responses. This will enable you to hear not only what another person is saying but also what he or she is feeling. When you listen, show interest by being attentive and asking on-topic questions.

## **Step 3: Help Patrons As Needed to Select and Use Resources**

All patrons doing family history research do not start at the same point in the five-step process. Since some have accomplished more than others, so first find out what patrons have done, then determine what they need to do.

[https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Research\\_Process](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Research_Process)



Use [https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/A\\_Guide\\_to\\_Research](https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/A_Guide_to_Research)