

Short Guide for Mission Presidents

This guide is from the book *Home Early... Now What?*

Mission presidents are some of the few that have information directly from the Church to help you navigate missionaries' early return. While this is not an official guide below, it is a list of suggestions stemming from many conversations with early RMs.

If I could tell you one thing:

You set the tone for how the missionary views their mission. If you help them understand that a mission is not about length but a desire to serve, they will have a desire to seek for Heavenly Father's help as they navigate this trial.

1. Proceed with the assumption that the missionary has done their best.

I would venture a guess that no missionary has ever left for his mission saying, "See you in two months, Mom!" Missionaries do not plan on returning home early. Trust that most have tried to stay in the mission as long as they could (or should). When appropriate, talk with them about their strengths and their contribution to the mission. They will hold onto what you say in the hard times ahead.

2. Recognize that the missionary may feel a lot of fear and/or be traumatized.

Many early RMs fear that they have failed the Lord. Reassuring a missionary that missions come in all types and lengths can help them feel less anxiety about returning. Encourage them to be kind to themselves and to allow themselves to heal over the months and years ahead.

3. Give the missionary possible next steps to consider.

Whatever the reason for sending a missionary home early, gently remind them that there are many ways to serve the Lord. Encourage them to reach out to their bishops immediately and ask for a calling/responsibility. There may be some who feel that their mission is not over. Tell all worthy missionaries returning about the young Church-service missionary program [lds.org/yccsm]. Some missionaries can begin their new service mission within hours of returning.

4. Give as much information to the parents as possible.

Too many parents I have spoken with have been absolutely clueless that their child was coming home until last minute because a mission office did not contact them or assumed that the bishop or stake president would contact them. When appropriate, share with the family about the missionary's service and strengths. Consider downloading the free *Short Guide for Parents* on earlyRM.com for them to read through on their way to the airport.