



Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven



SWEAT EQUITY POLICY

1. Purpose of Sweat Equity

Sweat equity is one of the key distinctions of the Habitat for Humanity of Greater New Haven (HFHGNH) homeownership program. The term refers to the actual hands-on involvement of partner families in the construction of their own homes, along with participation in other Habitat and community activities.

Sweat equity is not a simple programmatic requirement, nor is it meant to be a test which the partner families pass or fail. Rather, sweat equity is intended to contribute to three fundamental goals in the Habitat program:

1. *Partnership*: The mission of Habitat for Humanity is to assist partner families in the construction of their own home. Sweat equity provides meaningful interaction between partner families, Habitat volunteers, other homeowners, Habitat staff, community members and future neighbors.
2. *Pride in ownership*: As families work on their own homes, they begin to develop a sense of pride and attachment. Families invest not only their money, but also time and energy into their homes, and witness the work of others on their behalf.
3. *Development of skills and knowledge*: On the building site, partner families gain an understanding of the construction of their home and of maintenance issues they will face after occupancy.

2. Requirements for Sweat Equity

Partner families are required to complete 400 hours of sweat equity before closing on their homes. Sweat equity may be acquired in various ways, but each primary applicant will be required to personally earn at least 100 of those hours.

A maximum of two immediate family members (as defined by HUD) may start when the applicant begins as long as the applicant is present. Family members must abide by all HFHGNH rules regarding the safety video, waivers, sign-in sheets and scheduling of work days. In the case of co-applicants, 80 hours must be completed before individuals other than the immediate family can earn hours for contribution. In the case of a sole applicant, 40 hours must be completed before individuals other than the immediate family can earn hours for contribution.

The maximum number of additional volunteers (family or non-family) on any day is two per applicant.

Children are not considered primary applicants, and children under the age of 16 are not allowed on the construction site for insurance reasons. However, children may earn sweat equity hours in other ways, and all family members are encouraged to participate.

There is no set time frame for when sweat equity must be completed. Each family is different in their ability to contribute sweat equity each week and should work with their Habitat partner to establish reasonable goals. Habitat's requirement is that once families have been accepted into the program, they should be "working steadily" toward fulfilling their sweat equity commitment, which is generally considered to be completing **at least** 60 hours each month. If this is not possible for the family, then the family should carefully consider if the Habitat program is right program for them at this time.

Sweat equity is broken down as follows:

1. Fourteen (14) hours must be completed before the application for the Habitat program will be approved.
2. Once the family accepts a Habitat home, **they may work in the construction of their house if work is available. If not, they will work where assigned by the construction supervisor.** (Note: There is no financial value placed on sweat equity, and it is not considered part of the down payment for a home. If a family withdraws their application before completing a house or is asked to leave the program, there is no financial compensation for sweat equity hours already completed.)

3. How Sweat Equity hours are earned

A. Work at the construction site by the applicant(s):

The primary way for families to earn sweat equity hours is through participation at the construction site, either on that family's home or on another Habitat house. Habitat encourages partner families to earn as many of their sweat equity hours on site as possible. Work days must be scheduled in advance with the Volunteer Coordinator. In addition, all volunteers will be required to register online at **Volunteer Up**.

At the construction site, each applicant must sign the Volunteer Register and fill out a volunteer waiver each day before beginning to work. The family must also bring along the Sweat Equity Voucher Book that each family receives after they are accepted into the program. Whenever they complete time toward their sweat equity, they should enter:

1. The name of the person working.
2. The family for whom the hours are being worked.
3. The time the individual began work.
4. The time the individual ended work.

If a person doing sweat equity hours must leave during the day, that person should sign out for the time they are gone, and sign in again when they return. Habitat expects that, when on site, families will be engaged in constructive activities. Families will only earn sweat equity hours for the time spent on site actually working. Please note that whenever possible, persons doing sweat equity should be present for the entire work day on site, as it is disruptive to the construction process when people come and go.

Be sure that the construction supervisor at the work site initials the sweat equity voucher for each day of work. For non-construction hours, the Family Partner or someone at the Habitat office should initial the hours. Completed vouchers must be submitted each month.

B. Other ways to earn Sweat Equity hours:

Partner families may recruit others including members of their family, members of their congregation, co-workers, volunteers or friends to contribute sweat equity hours towards the family's 400-hour goal. The construction supervisor must initial sweat equity hours completed on site by friends, family members, partners or volunteers.

1. During the course of construction, the family may seek assistance in completing the Sweat Equity hours. However, the following restrictions apply in recruiting individuals for this purpose:
 - a. The family must make arrangements with volunteers *in advance* of coming to the work site. The family *may not* ask volunteers they have just met or seen that day on site to contribute hours toward the family's sweat equity.
 - b. At least one of the primary applicants must also be at the site when the family, friends and volunteers, etc. are working to contribute hours toward the family's sweat equity, as the concept of volunteers "donating" sweat equity hours is that volunteers and partner families are working together.
 - c. A maximum of two individuals per day, including immediate family members, will be permitted to work toward contributed hours with the applicant(s).
 - d. All individuals contributing hours must adhere to all rules established by HFHGNH regarding the safety video, waivers, sign-in sheets and scheduling with the Volunteer Coordinator.
2. Family members may earn sweat equity hours by volunteering at the Habitat office, at the Habitat ReStore, at Habitat sponsored events, or helping with Habitat projects as requested.
3. Primary applicants may earn a maximum of 15 sweat equity hours by attending homeowner education workshops, sponsored either by Habitat or some other source, provided that the family partner has given prior approval. If an applicant receives approval to attend an event not sponsored by Habitat, that person should bring an attendance record form, or one like it, to their family partner. The form should state:
 - a. The date of the workshop.
 - b. Who sponsored the event (i.e., Home Depot).
 - c. Topic of the event or workshop.
 - d. Total hours of workshop.
 - e. Signature of someone sponsoring the event or workshop.

4. Once families have been assigned a house, families may earn a maximum of 15 hours through participation in block watch and/or community management team meetings in their new neighborhood.
5. If an applicant identifies a workshop or event not listed which that person believes would fulfill the purposes of sweat equity, that family member may submit that suggestion to their family partner in advance for consideration as sweat equity, for a maximum of 15 hours.
6. If an applicant or a family partner has a question about whether an activity qualifies for sweat equity, they should ask Habitat's Family Partner **before** engaging in that activity. Habitat reserves the right to decline awarding sweat equity hours for activities other than working on a construction site if the activity was not approved in advance.

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