

HOMEOWNER SELECTION -- How it works

It usually begins with a phone call or letter to HFHOC's office.

A Homeowner Selection Committee member returns the call. That phone discussion helps us decide if the caller appears to be a good candidate. If so, we send a **"Pre-Application"** form out asking that it be returned to us quickly. If the "Pre-Application" form information shows that the family may fit our requirements, then a packet with more **Complete Application** materials is sent. We ask that this be returned within 30 days. Reviewing those materials we decide if we should move to the next step, which is a home visit, a committee review, and a vote.

A potentially viable family is one that meets the following three conditions:

1. Currently living in substandard housing, for example over crowded, poorly insulated, unsafe, maybe mold and mildew, cracked windows, leaky roof, sagging flooring, exposed wiring, etc. Older mobile homes often qualify.

2. Total income should be between 35% and 65% of the median income for Otsego County for a family's size (see below). The family must show evidence of employment or a stable source of income. Credit history is considered but is not a deciding factor. At closing the family must make a down payment of 1% of the sale price of the house plus about \$2,000 for one year of homeowners insurance and filing fees, but have a long time to save up for this expense.

Monthly payments are usually equal to or below average rents in our area.

Qualifying Income Range- HFH Otsego County, New York State (based on HUD FY2017 Income Limits in Otsego County, NY)									
From	Family members	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Calculated(35%)	Min. Income	\$15,330	\$17,500	\$19,705	\$21,875	\$23,625	\$25,375	\$27,125	\$28,875
Calculated(65%)	Max. Income	\$28,470	\$32,500	\$36,562	\$40,625	\$43,875	\$47,125	\$50,375	\$53,625

3. Willingness to partner. We build with our prospective homeowners, not for them. Single parent families are required to put in a total of 250 hours "sweat equity," and 500 hours are required if there are two adults in the household. The first one-fifth of that (20% or 50 or 100 hours respectively) is earned working on another family's house before an accepted family moves from "provisional" to "full" partnership, and we begin to plan for their home. We want to be sure the family is willing and eager to do what it takes to earn and maintain their house.

The devil is in the details. One Selection Committee member is assigned to work with the applicant. There is a lot of paperwork, including background checks, financial disclosures, a home visit, etc. We offer to help applicants fill out the forms. Two committee members go on a home visit to meet the family and assess their situation.

Once all the data is collected and analyzed they report to the committee, which votes. If the vote is "Yes" the data (but no identifying information about the family) is presented to HFHOC's Board. If the Board approves, the family becomes a Provisional Homeowner and they begin their sweat equity. At that point the Homeowner Support Committee takes over to track hours and advocate for the family. Once 20% of their hours are completed the family moves from Provisional to Full Homeowner and, subject to scheduling, our volunteers can begin their house.

Our need for families never ends. We plan to build every year. Our **Provisional** Homeowners work on current home projects to fulfill their sweat equity requirement in order to become **Full** Homeowners and start their house.

The selection process is slow and meticulous. We typically build one house a year, and usually have two or three Provisional Homeowners working with us to fulfill their preliminary sweat equity. All our volunteers work hard and expect Homeowner families to do likewise. We want families who will be good neighbors. We often interview families a year or two before their home will be started and make sure they understand that. Most often we have families chosen for several years into the future. When we do, we postpone accepting new applications. Once in a while Provisional families move away or withdraw, creating a more immediate need to recruit a new family. So our Homeowner Selection Committee always seems to have work to do.