

2017 Family Selection Criteria

OVERVIEW STATEMENT

Sussex County Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit, equal opportunity, Christian housing ministry dedicated to helping low-income families improve the conditions in which they live. Monies are raised by gifts and non-interest loans that serve as capital for building houses. Construction is a cooperative effort involving both volunteer workers and future homeowners. Houses are sold to a family on a nonprofit, no-interest basis. The capital originally used to build the house is returned to Sussex County Habitat through the family's monthly mortgage payment over a 20-30 year period, and is used to build more houses in Sussex County.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SUSSEX COUNTY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY HOUSING

The applicant household must understand that the family selection process involves an in-depth investigation of applicants by the Family Selection Team. The investigation will include a review of the application and supporting documentation, a credit check, employment and income verification, a check of the Division of State Police Sex Offender Registry, and personal visits and interviews by team members. After this screening process is complete, those applicants who satisfy all of the selection criteria will be placed into a lottery, from which the prospective homeowners will be chosen.

Applicants for Sussex County Habitat homes must be United States citizens or legal permanent residents.

Standards set by the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) require Sussex County Habitat to provide an occupant for each bedroom, provide children of different sex with separate bedrooms, and prevent more than two persons from sharing a single bedroom. The home currently under renovation will have 3 bedrooms. These standards should be taken into consideration by prospective applicants, to determine whether or not the Habitat home will be able to accommodate their families.

The three criteria used in determining eligibility as Habitat homeowners are: actual need, finances (ability to pay), and willingness to partner. A detailed breakdown of these criteria follows:

I. Actual Need – Applicants currently lack adequate housing, and the ability to obtain adequate housing. Factors considered in evaluating level of need include, but may not be limited to:

1. Housing conditions are substandard or unsafe (e.g., problems with heating, water supply, electricity, bathrooms, kitchen structure, unsafe neighborhood).
2. Rent payment is more than 50% of total household monthly income.
3. Number of bedrooms is inadequate for family size.
4. Current shelter is temporary (e.g., living with friends or relatives).
5. The family has no other possibility for home ownership, as determined by an inability to secure a conventional market loan or a bank long-term home mortgage.

II. Finances (Ability to Pay) – Applicants must demonstrate the ability to meet financial obligations associated with ownership of a Habitat home, without threatening household income. Financial criteria include, but may not be limited to:

1. As an example, the applicants’ (i.e., those persons who will be responsible for repayment of the note) gross annual income must be at least \$25,000 for a 2 bedroom home and will increase with the number of bedrooms. The minimum income will be determined by the size of the home.
2. The total household gross annual income must be a maximum of 50% of the median income for the applicable family size for the Sussex County geographic area as determined by COAH, and as specified in the table below. The income of every person age 18 or older living in the house will be counted in determining maximum income.

Number of Persons in Household Maximum Household Gross Annual Income - 2014 COAH Limits (These are subject to change)(most recent information available)

1	\$29,548
2	\$33,769
3	\$37,990
4	\$42,211
5	\$45,588
6	\$48,965

3. Applicants must demonstrate at least two years of steady income within the required income range.
4. Applicants must submit a \$25 Application Fee per adult by money order together with the Application for Housing. This fee covers Habitat’s cost of obtaining the applicants’ credit report and score. The credit score and debt to income ratio will be taken into consideration in evaluating the applicants’ ability to meet financial obligations associated with ownership of a Habitat home.

III. Willingness to Partner - Applicants must be willing to accept these responsibilities:

Attendance at the Home Application Orientation Session

At the Orientation Session we will explain how Habitat works and the concept of sweat equity, we will review the application form, and we will tell you about the house we will be either building or remodeling. You’ll be able to ask any questions you may have. The session will be held at the Sussex County Habitat for Humanity Office, 82 Mount View St, Newton, NJ 07860 from 10 AM – 12 PM.

You must either call the Sussex County Habitat office at (973) 940-0503 or e-mail us at familyselection@sussexcountyhfh.org to register for this Mandatory Orientation Session. Please provide us with your full name, address & phone number. Applicants MUST attend this session in order to apply for a home. Latecomers will NOT be admitted.

1. Disclosure of financial information including employment history, household income, and present indebtedness.
2. Disclosure of personal information pertaining to current shelter.

3. Completion of Habitat Application for Housing and submission of required supporting documentation and \$25 Application Fee and \$50 per adult background check unless you proved us with your background check that is not older than 6 months.
4. Sweat equity is a valuable tool in building a partnership between families, volunteers, and the Sussex County affiliate of Habitat for Humanity. Up to 500 hours of sweat equity are required for the construction of a new home. Half the total required sweat equity that a partner family must invest in the project shall be directly on the construction of the house.
5. Payment of closing costs of about \$5000 with \$1,000 down payment at time of acceptance.
6. Payment of mortgage, property taxes, and homeowners insurance.
7. Maintenance and repairs of house after occupancy.
8. Must grant Sussex County Habitat the first option to buy back the house at a price determined by COAH in the event of a sale.
9. **Completion of the following programs:**
 - A. 'Individual Development Account (IDA) Club' or 'First Home Club' – A yearlong matched savings program to help families manage their finances, save money, and learn about the responsibilities of home ownership. Savings are applied toward the purchase of your home. Applicants must be enrolled in this program prior to being accepted into the lottery for a Habitat home.
 - B. 'Step by Step to Home Ownership' – Two 4-hour workshops focusing on home-buying basics. Applicants must complete this program prior to move-in.
 - C. 'Home Smart' – A one-evening workshop to assist first time homebuyers with caring for and maintaining their home. Applicants must commit to attending this workshop within 6 months of move-in.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Sussex County Habitat is pledged to the letter and spirit of U.S. policy for the achievement of equal housing opportunity throughout the nation. Sussex County Habitat does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religious creed, gender, handicap, age, or familial status in any activity involving the selling, renting or leasing of housing accommodations. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact Sussex County Habitat for Humanity at (973) 940-0503 or familyselection@sussexcountyhfh.org.