



Volunteer Handbook

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity
Office Location: Florence Community Center 140 Pine St. #4
Mailing Address: PO Box 60642 Florence, MA 01062
413-586-5430 (office)
volunteer@pvhabitat.org
www.pvhabitat.org

SIGN UP for Construction Shifts at VolunteerUP!
<http://www.volunteerup.com/ProjectCal.asp?o=40>



Follow us on Instagram: @pvhabitatforhumanity
Follow us on YouTube: @pvhabitat
Like us on Facebook: **Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity**
(to get all our updates)

Updated: January 2025

Congratulations – You have completed Volunteer Orientation!

With your support, Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity builds strength, stability and self-reliance through home ownership in Hampshire and Franklin Counties. We're an affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International, an ecumenical organization that envisions a world where everyone has a decent place to live. [Habitat for Humanity](#) partners with people all over the world to help them build or improve a place they can call home. Habitat homeowners help build their own homes alongside volunteers and pay an affordable mortgage.

Online Safety Video for Construction Volunteers: Please review this 18-minute safety video before you sign up for your first construction shift:

- In English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPVa5-xfyXM>
- In Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c9bcQ77WIE>

Habitat for Humanity volunteers and employees are encouraged to take appropriate training courses before working at a jobsite, store, office, fundraiser or other Habitat-related event. Follow the instructions below to take an online safety training course. How to take a training course:

1. Visit HFHAffiliateInsurance.com/courses.
2. Enter access code **W8NAEBTG**.
3. Select any relevant courses from the course catalog. We recommend *Volunteering on a Habitat Job Site*.
4. Follow along with the presentation and complete the 10-question quiz. Scores 70% and above pass the course. If you do not pass, please retake the course. Once you have passed the training course, the affiliate you selected will receive notice of your course completion.

Construction Volunteers:

Please sign up for workdays you are interested in attending using VolunteerUp! *You must do this before going to the site*, and please make sure you fill out the entire form, *including all waivers*. In order to ensure a smooth work day, please show up on time! (**9AM** on Weekdays and Saturdays and **12PM** on Sundays). Double check the schedule the night before you volunteer to make sure you have the right time and site. Sign in at the construction site when you arrive. You must work the full shift that you sign up for. If you know that you can only volunteer for a few hours please sign up for a morning only shift (9am-12pm) or a Sunday work shift (12-4pm). If the weather is questionable, we may impose a 2-hour delay or cancel the workday entirely. If you are signed up in VolunteerUp! we will notify you directly via phone and/or email. Also, check VolunteerUP! before you go to the site, to see if there is a last-minute cancellation. We will do our best to reach you if this is the case.

Safety on the Site:

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity and all of its volunteers must work together to create a safe work environment for all. Please obey the rules at the site and do not engage in unsafe behavior under any circumstances. Site supervisors and crew leaders may ask you to leave if your behavior is seen to be an endangerment or threat to yourself or other members of the work party.

Let the site supervisor know if you are uncomfortable doing a particular type of task (say, being on a ladder) and please check with the volunteer coordinator on what type of work will be done that day before you sign up.

Please do not bring drugs, alcohol, or guns to the work site. Smoking is not permitted at the site at any time. Volunteers should not be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol while volunteering. Use of prescribed drugs on the job is allowed only if it does not impair your ability to work safely.

Preparing for your work day:

Dress appropriately for the construction site. This includes wearing sturdy, closed-toe shoes; and weather-appropriate clothing that is not loose or ripped. Gloves, safety helmets, and tools are provided on-site. However, if you have your own, you are welcome to bring them, just mark them with your initials. **Please bring your own lunch and water if you are working a full day.**

Everyone Is Welcome

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity has an open-door policy: all who believe that everyone needs a decent, affordable place to live are welcome to help with the work, regardless of race, religion, age, gender, political views or any of the other distinctions that too often divide people. In short, Habitat welcomes volunteers and supporters from all backgrounds and also serves people in need of decent housing regardless of race or religion. Habitat for Humanity and its affiliate organizations will not proselytize. Nor will Habitat work with entities or individuals who insist on proselytizing as part of their work with Habitat. This means that Habitat will not offer assistance on the expressed or implied condition that people must adhere to or convert to a particular faith or listen and respond to messaging designed to induce conversion to a particular faith.

Prevention of Harassment

It is the policy of PVHH to maintain a working environment free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. PVHH fully believes that a harassment-free working environment is essential to supporting our beliefs of respecting every human being and of carrying out our daily activities with integrity and dignity.

If you believe you have experienced harassment in any form, you should bring it to the attention of the Executive Director (Megan McDonough 413-586-5430 x106, megan@pvhabitat.org). We are available to discuss any concerns you may have and to provide information to you about our policy on the prevention of harassment and our complaint process. Such complaints will be investigated in as swift and confidential manner.

Youth (14-17 years) Participation Regulations If you are under age 16, you are not permitted on an active construction site under any circumstances. Youth ages from 16-17 may volunteer on the construction site, but must bring a **signed youth waiver** each and every time they build with us, and be accompanied by 1 responsible adult (ages 21 or older) per 4 youth. Youth ages from 14-15 but may be able to do other volunteering activity with a **signed youth waiver**.

- No youths should do anything designated as hazardous by the U. S. Department of Labor.
- Youths (persons under the age of 18) who come to a build site as part of an organized youth group must be accompanied a teacher or other adult, no more than four youths per adult. All other youth volunteers must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.
- Youths age 16 – 17 may work on a site but they cannot:
 - Climb on or work from extension ladders or scaffolding.
 - Use most power tools (this includes circular saws, table saws, pneumatic nailers or fasteners, grinders, routers, planers, and so on). Drills, palm sanders, and drywall fasteners may be used under supervision.
 - Perform any roofing work, even work on the ground that is related to the roofing work.
 - Perform any demolition work.
 - Perform any unsupervised work.
- Youths age 14 - 15 may not come to a work site while active construction is going on, but they may participate in some landscaping or clean-up activities after construction is complete.
- Youths under age 14 are not permitted on the construction site during construction activity.

Groups/Team Builds:

Please contact the office to schedule a group build for your business, church, school or organization:
volunteer@pvhabitat.org or 413-586-5430 x104.

Committee, Office Volunteers, and Special Tasks

We are always looking for new additions to our committees. We ask for a minimum year- long commitment unless you are doing a specific, time-sensitive task for a committee.

Committees:

Building	Finance	Safety
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	Hospitality	Site Selection
Family Selection	Landscape	Special Events & Fundraisers
Family Support	New Volunteer Orientation	

Office volunteers are invited to spend a few hours each week or month in our office helping out with tasks that come up frequently (data entry or office cleaning for example) or sporadically (newsletter mailings, etc.).

Fact Sheet

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit, ecumenical housing organization whose goal is to make home ownership possible for low-income families in Hampshire and Franklin counties. Through the donation of money, land, expertise, and labor, we commit ourselves to build safe, decent, affordable homes in partnership with families in need.

The need here is great. Few families in Hampshire and Franklin counties live in shacks, but 46% of low-income renting households are what HUD calls “cost-burdened,” spending more than a third of their income for shelter. Increased building costs, a decrease in total housing stock, and cutbacks in government programs have combined to force housing costs up. Today, it would take a minimum wage earner 104 hours of work a week to pay the fair market rent on a two-bedroom unit in Massachusetts. Families in the shrinking supply of subsidized housing are locked in, as rents go up with income. Moreover, mortgages, in these units are gradually being privatized.

Since it was formed, Pioneer Valley Habitat has raised funds from individuals, corporations, churches, and foundations to build homes. Habitat families are low-income earners and have become integral, tax-paying members of their communities; their mortgage payments help to build more houses. Our tithe has also built at least an equal number of homes in Haiti.

Since 1989, Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity has led the community effort to create:

- A duplex condo home on Pine Brook Curve, Northampton 1993
- A duplex condo home on Charles Lane, Amherst 1996
- A duplex condo home on Prospect St, Orange 1997
- A single-family home on Cahillane Terrace, Northampton 1999
- A duplex condo home on Vernon and Forbes Ave, Northampton 2000
- A single-family home on West Pomeroy Lane, Amherst 2001
- A duplex condo home on Ryan Road, Northampton 2002
- Two duplex condo homes on Montague City Road, Greenfield 2002-2006
- Three duplex condo homes on Westhampton Road, Northampton 2003-2007
- Two single family homes on L Street, Turners Falls 2006-2009
- Four single family homes on Stanley Street, Amherst 2007-2011
- A zero-lot-line two family home on Garfield Ave in Florence 2008-2011
- One single family home on Warner Street, Montague City 2010-2013
- One single family home on Garfield Ave, Florence 2011-2013
- One single family home on Belchertown Road, Amherst 2012-2013
- Two single family homes on Garfield Avenue, Florence 2012-2014
- A zero-lot-line two family home on East St, Easthampton 2014-2015
- A duplex condo home on East Pleasant St, Amherst 2015-2017
- A duplex on North Pleasant St, Amherst 2017-2018
- A single-family home on Smith St, Greenfield 2017-2018
- A single-family home on Garfield Ave, Florence 2018 – 2019

Four single family homes on Glendale Rd, Northampton 2018 – 2021
A single-family home on West Pelham Rd, Shutesbury 2020-2021
Two single-family homes on Amherst Rd, Pelham 2021 – 2022
Three single-family homes on Burts Pit Rd, Northampton 2021 – 2023
One single-family home on South Deerfield Rd, Conway 2022 – 2023
Three single-family homes on Burts Pit Rd, Northampton 2023 –2024
One single-family home on Petty Plain Rd, Greenfield 2024-
One single-family home on Woodland Dr, Northampton 2024-
Four single-family homes on Cooke Ave, Northampton 2025-

Sources:

American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2010-2014): Financial Characteristics.

Franklin County, monthly housing costs as percentage of household income 30+% for those with income >\$50,000, 43.7%

Hampshire County, monthly housing costs as percentage of household income 30+% for those with income >\$50,000, 47.4%

Average 45.55%

Out of Reach. 2016. "Massachusetts." National Low-Income Housing Coalition

"104 work hours per week at minimum wage needed to afford a 2-bedroom unit at FMR"

Myth: Habitat for Humanity gives houses away to poor people.

Truth: Houses are not given to anyone. Habitat for Humanity offers homeownership opportunities to families who are unable to obtain conventional house financing. Generally, this includes those whose income is 30 to 60 percent of the area's median income. In most cases, prospective Habitat homeowner families make at least a \$700 down payment. Additionally, they contribute 250 to 500 hours of "sweat equity" on the construction of their home or someone else's home. Because Habitat houses are built using donations of land, material and labor, mortgage payments are kept affordable.

Myth: Habitat houses reduce a neighborhood's property values.

Truth: Housing studies show affordable housing has no adverse effect on neighborhood property values. In fact, Habitat houses have proven to increase property values and local government tax income. Habitat firmly believes its approach to affordable housing improves neighborhoods and communities by strengthening community spirit and increasing tax base while building better citizens through the cooperative efforts involved in Habitat construction.

Myth: Habitat builds houses only for _____ group.

Truth: Habitat doesn't build houses *for* anyone. We build houses *with* people in need regardless of race, religion or any other difference. Prospective homeowners must meet three criteria: need; ability to repay the mortgage; and a willingness to partner with Habitat.

Myth: Habitat homeowners are on welfare.

Truth: While some Habitat homeowners receive Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children, it is part of the reliable income needed from allowable sources. Most work at low-wage jobs, show a steady work history, and the income necessary to pay the mortgage they will acquire. They buy the house from Habitat. Typically, their annual income is less than half the local median income in their community. Habitat works in good faith with people who often are at risk in society, knowing that owning a home is not the answer to every problem, but that it can be an important step – often the first step – toward helping people break out of the cycle of poverty.

Myth: You have to be Christian to become a Habitat homeowner.

Truth: Habitat homeowners are chosen without regard to race, religion or ethnic group, in keeping with U.S. law and with Habitat's abiding belief that God's love extends to everyone. Habitat also welcomes volunteers from all faiths, or no faith, who actively embrace Habitat's goal of eliminating poverty housing from the world.

Myth: Habitat for Humanity International dictates policy and practices for every local Habitat organization.

Truth: Local Habitat affiliates are independent, nonprofit organizations that operate within a specific service area within the framework of the Habitat Affiliate Covenant.

Myth: Habitat for Humanity is an arm of the government.

Truth: Habitat for Humanity is not an arm of the government, nor an arm of any particular church denomination. Habitat is an independent, nonprofit organization that accepts some government funds and other resources to help provide houses for those in need.

Myth: Habitat for Humanity was founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Truth : Habitat was started in 1976 in Americus, Ga., by the late Millard Fuller and his wife Linda. President Carter and his wife Rosalynn (whose home is eight miles from Americus, in Plains, Ga.), have been longtime Habitat supporters and volunteers who help bring national attention to the organization's house-building work. Each year, they lead the Jimmy Carter Work Project to help build houses and raise awareness of the need for affordable housing.



Construction Safety Rules and Practices

Building Committee Approved: 2/1/2016

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity (PVHH) and all of its volunteers must work together to create a safe work environment for all. Safety must be a top priority at all times on a building site. Site supervisors and crew leaders may ask anyone to leave if that person's behavior or attire is seen to be an endangerment or threat to him/herself or to other members of the work party.

All volunteers must complete the on-line safety training offered by Lockton Insurance prior to working on an active construction site. Drugs, alcohol and smoking are not allowed on site.

Volunteers under the age of 18, and parents/guardians of youth volunteers, must abide by the regulations governing youth participation in Habitat construction summarized at the end of this document.

The remainder of this document includes important safety rules and practices, but it is not comprehensive. For more information on construction safety, consult the Habitat for Humanity International Construction Safety Manual.

Overarching Safety Principles

- **Your safety and the safety of everyone else on a construction site is paramount.**
- **If you are asked to use a tool with which you are not familiar, ask for assistance or training before attempting the task.**
- **If you are assigned a task with which you are not comfortable, such as climbing a ladder or using a tool, ask for a different task.**
- **No job is so important that it can't be done safely.**
- **Do not rush the job. Your safety and the safety of you fellow volunteers are more important than speed.**

Wear Proper Attire to the Work Site

- Construction is messy. Don't wear clothing you would not want to get dirty or torn.
- Wear clothing appropriate for the weather. We suggest layers so you can add or peel off as needed.
- Do not wear loose or baggy clothing, unbuttoned shirts or dangling jewelry. These present a serious safety hazard, as they can get caught in saws or other power tools. Keep long hair pulled back out of the way.
- Wear boots or sturdy shoes with thick soles, steel-toed if possible. Do not wear sandals or flip-flops.
- Wear sun screen if working outside.
- Hard hats, safety glasses, hearing protection, and gloves are provided by Habitat, or you can bring your own. **Hard hats are required at all times.**

Be aware of your surroundings

- Look for potential hazards on the ground within your area, or overhead.
- Watch for slippery conditions, overhead power lines, unguarded floor openings, protruding nails, and trip hazards.
- Be alert to other workers in your vicinity. Be especially careful when moving long boards or sheets of plywood.
- Do not leave tools where they could be tripped over or could fall on someone's head.

Avoid exhaustion or heat injury

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Take breaks as necessary.

Keep the job site safe

- Maintain a clean job site.
- Report hazardous conditions to the site supervisor.
- Keep flammable liquids sealed.
- Read and follow the safety information on the labels.
- Ask questions if you are unsure of something.
- Avoid the use of cell phones in the immediate work area, as they are potentially a hazardous distraction.

Job site safety equipment

- Hard hats are required at all times.
- Safety glasses are required when using hammers and power tools and are recommended at all times.
- Hearing protection should be used when using nail guns and other loud tools.
- Gloves are recommended for some tasks.
- Know where the first aid kit is located, usually inside the construction shed.
- Know where the list of emergency contact numbers is posted.

Power tools

- **Wear safety glasses when using power tools. Hearing protection is also recommended.**
- Make sure you are familiar with using the tool and how to use it safely. If not, ask the site supervisor or crew leader for instruction.
- Inspect all tools before using. Report frayed power cords, missing guards, or any other safety hazard to the site supervisor.
- Use only when standing on firm footing.
- Unplug prior to changing blades or attachments.
- Be sure object being cut is secure.
- Start a saw with the blade clear of the object.
- Never reach under or lean over the material being cut.
- Do not allow a saw blade to bind during a cut.

Ladder, staging, and roof safety

- Check ladder condition before use.
- One person climbs at a time.
- One person always steadies an extension ladder. For exterior work, step ladders must be made secure by leveling, preferably by excavating the high side so both feet are on solid ground.
- Do not use the top two steps.
- Do not use the back stays for climbing.
- Obey 4:1 rule: for every 4 feet in height the ladder base must be 1 foot from the wall.
- Ladders leading onto the roof should extend 3 feet higher than the roof edge.
- When on a ladder, do not lean out to reach something on the side. Get down and move the ladder.
- Do not leave tools unattended on staging, on top of step ladders, or anywhere else they could fall and hurt someone.
- Use caution when walking or climbing on staging. During winter months ice can form on the surface or poles. Do not step outside the frame.
- Use OSHA planks and, if possible, plywood to assemble the walking surface on top of pipe staging.
- Install guard rails on staging and around open stairways and doors
- Exercise extreme caution when climbing to, working on, or descending from a roof.

Lifting safety

- Ask for help with heavy or large objects.
- Stand close to the load.
- Bend at the knees, not at the waist.
- Lift with legs, not the back.

Cold weather safety

- Snow and ice on the job site can be serious slipping hazards and should be cleared from walkways prior to beginning work.
- Come to the site prepared with several layers of clothes, thick socks, boots, gloves, and waterproof outerwear if necessary.
- Be aware of any loss of feeling in fingers or toes and keep an eye on your fellow volunteers for signs of discomfort such as extreme shivering.
- If you or anyone on site experiences any of these symptoms seek warm shelter if it is available on site. If there is not sufficient shelter built, warming up in a vehicle can help. If neither of these options are available or deemed insufficient, leaving the site to seek warm shelter is encouraged.

PVHH Respiratory Illness Policy for Worksites & Office

APPROVED BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1/28/2025

BACKGROUND:

Covid-19 enhanced our awareness about the health risks of respiratory illness on our worksites and in our office. This policy seeks to provide a framework by which PVHH volunteers and staff can work as safely as possible given the significant relaxation of the more significant COVID-19 pandemic era precautions.

Evaluating Risk

Everyone should evaluate their own individual risks of contracting disease, including underlying medical conditions, living arrangements, and necessary contact with others who may be at increased risk. Nobody should feel any obligation to volunteer. Each person's primary concern should be their own and their family's safety.

PRECAUTIONS:

Vaccination

All staff and volunteers are strongly encouraged to stay up to date on their vaccinations (as defined by the CDC from time-to-time).

Close Contacts

Persons who have had recent confirmed exposure to a person with a serious respiratory illness or contagious disease should wear a mask when working inside a worksite structure or in the office, or stay at home.

Illness

No staff or volunteer is permitted to come to a work site if they have one or more symptoms of a transmissible respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, severe fatigue, loss of smell and/or taste, unexplained diarrhea) until the symptom(s) have abated for at least 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication.

Follow CDC guidance and precautions on when you can return after illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/precautions-when-sick.html>

Masks

During times of high community transmission of respiratory illness (such as Covid-19, RSV, Flu, etc.) the Executive Director, in consultation with the Safety Committee, may mandate masks indoors.

Hand Sanitation

Regular handwashing is encouraged. Each worksite will have an adequate supply of hand sanitizer. If this is not the case, notify the supervisor.

Ventilation

In times of high community transmission of respiratory illness (such as Covid-19, RSV, Flu, etc.), mechanical ventilation should be used. Each floor of a house under construction may be equipped with an exhaust fan and incorporated ductwork that provides for regular exchanges of air. The blower and duct should be tightly

coupled to a window to ensure that all the air is blown directly outside. All other windows in that room should be closed, with a window in each other room on that floor kept partly open.

SUBCONTRACTORS:

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity encourages subcontractors (including vocational students) to be up-to-date vaccinated (as defined by the CDC from time-to-time). **No subcontractor personnel are allowed to be on a worksite without first notifying and scheduling with Habitat management.** If you have not scheduled your work with Habitat, please call to check with your Habitat contact for approval before entering the site.

Habitat for Humanity's Safeguarding Behavior Commitments

September 2021

Habitat for Humanity is opposed to any form of discrimination, exploitation and abuse, including slavery, coerced conscription, prostitution, trafficking of persons for any purpose, vulnerable adult or child abuse, and dangerous or exploitative child labor. In the design and implementation of programs and policies, we seek always to work without bias, to do no harm and to reduce (rather than contribute to) the consequences of discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

All Habitat for Humanity representatives commit to respecting and safeguarding the rights and dignities of all people, and protecting our staff members, volunteers, partners, beneficiaries, research participants, and community members (especially vulnerable adults and children) from exploitation and abuse. This includes the following general standards of behavior:

- Habitat representatives will respect, promote and safeguard the rights and dignities of all people (with particular attention to those we intend to serve, vulnerable adults and children) without discrimination or bullying of any kind.
- Habitat representatives will treat all intended and actual individuals we serve with respect, courtesy and dignity.
- Habitat representatives will not engage in any form of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior toward those we intend to serve in any circumstances.
- Habitat representatives will not engage in any abuse of authority, position or influence by withholding humanitarian assistance or manipulating selection or targeting processes for those we intend to serve.
- Habitat representatives will help to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and that safeguards the rights of those we intend to serve, research participants, and community members (especially vulnerable adults and children).
- Habitat representatives will never engage in sexual exploitation or abuse.
- Habitat representatives will never engage in sexual activity with a child (anyone who is not yet 18 years old) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- Habitat representatives will never exchange money, employment, goods or services (including assistance that is due to those we intend to serve) for sex, sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior.
- Habitat representatives will not engage in a sexual relationship with those we intend to serve, since it is based on inherently unequal power dynamics and undermines the credibility and integrity of Habitat for Humanity's charitable mission.

By volunteering with Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity, I agree to be guided by Habitat for Humanity's Safeguarding Behavior Commitments.