



How do I become a Construction Leader at Habitat?

Who are the people who become volunteer construction leaders at HFHSL?

Generally, people who become volunteer construction leaders at HFHSL have worked as volunteers on the building sites and have become familiar with the processes we use to build homes. Volunteers come to Habitat through various paths. Some people attend individual volunteer orientation, others have volunteered through a non-sponsoring group or financial sponsor group, and some come through our partnership with St. Louis Community College.

Through any path, once a volunteer arrives at the building site, they quickly recognize the value of the role of the Construction Leaders. The people who work in this role are there to assure that the volunteers understand what to do, how to do it safely and efficiently, and to what standards it needs to be done. The Construction Leaders are essentially teachers and coaches. Their engagement in the actual work is usually through demonstrating how the tools are to be used and how the materials are to be installed. If everyone on their crew is fully engaged in the work, some Construction Leaders also participate in work, but this is generally the exception as there is always more teaching, demonstrating, organizing, auditing, coaching, and monitoring of safety processes for the Construction Leaders to do. While most Crew Leaders do not perform much of the work, they still generally have a very satisfying experience as they can see how much was accomplished through teaching others how to do the work efficiently, safely, and properly.

Most of the Construction Leaders do not start out having much residential construction experience. There are occasionally some construction professionals who participate in our process but most of the Construction Leaders entered this process with no prior construction background.

How do people without any actual construction experience learn how to lead this process?

Most people who offer to work toward becoming Construction Leaders have some prior experience working as a volunteer with HFH, either on our building sites or with some other Affiliate in another city. We would recommend that anyone who is interested in becoming a Construction Leader spend some time working as a volunteer on the building sites, to gain some awareness of what the Construction Leader role includes by watching a variety of people in this role interacting with their crews.

Most of those who plan to become Construction Leaders attend our Construction Leadership Training classes.

Crew and/or Task Leader Classes: This series of six classes covers the specific information about each phase of residential construction.

The topics of the six classes are:

- Construction Leadership & Blueprint Reading
- LEED & Safety
- Framing
- Flooring & Stair Basics
- Siding, Windows, Flashing, & Soffits
- Cabinets, Trim, & Doors

These classes would enable someone, with or without prior experience as a volunteer, to serve as a crew or task leader with a group of volunteers. It is likely that a crew leader trainee would work with an experienced Construction Leader on a task once or twice prior to leading the task, or work on a house with several crew leader trainees.

It would be possible for a Crew Leader Trainee (CLT) to attend these classes throughout the year, perhaps even across several years while gaining general experience as a Crew Leader in our building processes.

How does a Crew Leader trainee begin working on the site?

As a crew leader trainee completes courses he/she is required to complete a field day on the build site in which they will lead volunteers completing that task, under the supervision of an experienced Construction Leader, the instructor, or Habitat staff. Crew Leader Trainees will sign up to complete a field day for each task during the class session. CLT(s) will be scheduled either in groups on one house or in pairs with an experienced Construction Leader for a while to enable a trainee to become more familiar with the HFHSL construction processes and to become more comfortable interacting with the volunteers in a leadership position.

Once the trainee becomes comfortable, they will be scheduled as Task Leaders on those tasks with which they feel comfortable and are confident that they can lead. Some people continue to be specialists in one or more tasks and only work as Task Leaders when these tasks are being performed. Others tend to become familiar with all of the aspects of residential construction and serve as general Crew Leader. They provide services throughout the entire building process, leading whatever tasks are underway when they are available to serve as Crew Leaders.

If you are an industry professional and/or have several years experience in a particular area we would like for you to talk with our Director of Construction and/or our Construction Manager. Once you have shared your previous experiences with them they will determine what courses are necessary. Sometimes volunteers with previous construction experience catch on to "the Habitat way" rather quickly and other times they may need to see how we do it.

Contact Jacinta Witherspoon, Volunteer Services Manager at Jacinta@habitatstl.org or 314-371-0400, for further questions.