

Open Table (OT) at Hopevale: FAQ

Whom do we serve through Open Table? Brothers and Sisters ready to make steps to transition out of poverty and build relationship with our OT trained volunteers. Open Table has developed several models (ex: youth aging out of foster care), and we partner with organizations such as the Saginaw MAX System of Care in seeking referrals of promising candidates to be served through OT.

What commitments do Open Table members make? In addition to Table training, volunteers make a commitment to attend and participate in a weekly one hour meeting, at a time mutually arranged by Table members. Official Table service lasts for one year. Volunteers commit to communicating in person and on Basecamp, an OT electronic space, regarding Table concerns and news. Basecamp also enables ill or traveling Table members to keep in touch while they are away, and builds a more cohesive team.

Outside the official meeting, amount of time varies—from no extra time some weeks, to specific tasks (taking a Brother or Sister to an appointment, sharing in a meal, helping develop a life skill) that might take an hour or more. Table members may decline, at any time, to take on an additional task they cannot perform due to time or other constraints. Building relationship—with other Table members and the Brother or Sister—is the most important commitment. This can also grow through texts, phone calls, a card—various types of concern and care.

What training and preparation is involved? Table members complete an initial training together that consists of 3-4 sessions of about 2 hours each. Materials for training are provided by the Open Table organization and facilitated in-house by Hopevale leaders who have served on previous Tables. Throughout the year of service, there are periodic sessions to add to the training. Open Table is an organization served by lay people. You need not be a specialist in a given area—you do need a heart inclined to service, open to growth and change, and a willingness to work with and listen to others as you build relationship.

Table Fees: Hopevale is a licensed congregation in the Open Table organization, which means we partner with Open Table and use the OT model and resources (training, electronic interface, and more) in this ministry. There is a minimal \$10-per-month per table member fee (considered a modest cost similar to taking a missions trip) which helps support OT in providing these resources. Hopevale funds these costs for our Table members, believing that in equipping our members to serve, they will “Pay it forward” in a variety of other ways over their year of service.

I think I might want to volunteer. Where do I start? Go to Hopevale’s website: hopevale.org and the “Open Table” page is the first option under the “Serve” tab along the top of the page. Go there to view short videos and complete Hopevale’s Open Table Application. The application can be submitted electronically and will be reviewed within a few days by our Outreach Pastor and Open Table Missions Leaders.

What are my next steps? Hopevale volunteers serving on Open Table, like other Hopevale ministry volunteers, complete a national background screening at our expense. If you are a volunteer in other Hopevale ministries, you have probably already completed this step.

I can’t commit to a weekly meeting right now, but I have connections and/or skills I would like to contribute: In Open Table, we constantly search our “Hopevale network” for people across a spectrum of talents, connections, and resources. Even if you can’t give a year, do you know a good car repair service? Would you like to provide dental services? Can you provide an art, music, or karate lesson? Let us know your vocational or personal skill, interest, resource, or connection, and a future Table may wish to contact you! You can share about these resources through a form at the bottom of the Open Table page on the Hopevale website.

We can’t wait to hear from you!