

## **Equity Framework for THON 2021 & Beyond**

As awareness to social injustices related, but not limited, to race and religion throughout the country continues to increase, THON has also been made more aware of and admitted to our own shortcomings as an organization. We have identified various barriers to entry and inherently discriminatory practices within THON that need to be addressed. We are committed to creating a more inclusive environment with equitable opportunity for any Penn State student moving forward.

Our primary expectation for this document is for it to hold leadership and committee volunteers accountable to doing better. This starts now with THON 2021. Updates will be made throughout this year and in the future as more action and/or changes are needed to keep this initiative and conversation going indefinitely. The most up to date version of this document can be found on [thon.org/documents](http://thon.org/documents). As edits are made, notification will be sent via the THON Volunteer Update.

To contribute to these continued efforts, please email [communications@thon.org](mailto:communications@thon.org).

### **Accountability & Reporting:**

It has been brought to our attention that there is a serious lack of ability to submit an official conduct review or feedback other than directly via email. To formalize this process and provide optional anonymity, we have set up the following accountability and reporting avenues:

- 1) Accountability
  - a) Open style THON Community Roundtable for small group conversations about initiatives. This will include an alternative option to participate by submitting concerns or ideas via a form with an anonymous option.
  - b) Added zero-tolerance policy to the THON Rulebook and Volunteer Code of Conduct which are reviewed and signed by every THON Committee Member, Captain, and Director. If this policy, or any other item on the THON Volunteer Code of Conduct is broken, there is a conduct review.
  - c) Mandatory trainings for the THON Executive Committee and Captains by Penn State University professional staff to take place prior to selecting their committees. Trainings will address unconscious racial biases, identifying and

addressing microaggressions, and creating more welcoming environments within Captain and Committee Member settings.

2) Reporting

- a) Anonymous reporting form available on [www.thon.org](http://www.thon.org) [here](#) that will initiate a conduct review with potential for dismissal of volunteers that do not align with our organizational values. See addendum for values and review process.
- b) Reports can also be made directly to a THON Captain or Director via email, phone call, or face-to-face meeting. All THON Captains and Directors will serve as mandatory reporters and be knowledgeable about how to escalate the report.

*See the addendum for rulebook language and code of conduct review process.*

### **Recruitment & Engagement:**

We recognize that THON has not equitably represented the Penn State community, often enabling majority communities and failing to support minority communities. To better encompass all student volunteers, we plan to enact these items:

1. Recruitment

- a. Increased transparency regarding the demographics of families and research that THON supports to be shared on THON social platforms and website.
- b. Advertisements to be disseminated beyond our usual channels (social media, THON Website, etc.) in order to reach new audiences that are not already following our organization.
- c. Alternative recruitment and volunteer media available upon request (document voiceovers, closed captions, etc.)

2. Engagement

- a. Meet and form partnerships with organizations not affiliated with THON to learn more about their mission and efforts before asking them to do the same for us; identify ways to partner on collaborative events or initiatives.
- b. THON Weekend Dancer application that will award a set amount of dancer spots to new and/or small organizations based on criteria other than fundraising or family engagement.

*Note: This is not the same as Dancer Allocation that occurred on September 4 and will be a separate process*

## **Committee Members:**

We have been made aware of many different barriers to entry that exist for prospective THON Volunteers. These include a previous THON knowledge or experience requirement, unspoken academic expectation as well as an unrealistic financial and time commitment. Any Penn State student is more than capable to become a volunteer so THON 2021 will enact the following changes immediately to address these issues:

- 1) Application Process
  - a) Submission of GPA or resume to be replaced with yes/no question that an applicant is eligible to participate in student activities (GPA >2.0)
  - b) New application questions and process for first-year committee members so that no prior experience/knowledge is expected to join THON
    - i) No references needed
    - ii) No question that requires prior knowledge to answer
- 2) Volunteer Expectations
  - a) Committee Member meetings to not exceed 2 hours per week
  - b) Official process for how to make up a meeting to emphasize that personal health and academics should always come before THON if need be
  - c) Signed agreement to the THON Code of Conduct and Rulebook
- 3) Finances
  - a) Only merchandise required to be purchased is the THON Weekend Volunteer Shirt priced at \$10
  - b) Retreat or bonding activities to be price capped at \$20 per semester
  - c) New fund explicitly allocated to cover the above expenses for anyone who is unable to do so. Any student who anticipates needing financial assistance to participate can communicate with their Captain or Director when that need arises.

*While THON does not have the ability to hold members of organizations outside of THON accountable for their actions, we hope that this serves as inspiration for leaders of other organizations to take tangible steps in reviewing and improving their own organizations as well.*

## **Addendum**

### **THON Community Roundtable:**

So that this effort does not stop, the THON Community Roundtable will be an opportunity for anyone to participate in additional conversations. The ultimate goal of the group is to openly receive feedback regarding THON's shortcomings when it comes to creating an equitable organization while facilitating conversation on ways to improve moving forward.

The discussions in each roundtable will be related to what is going on at that point during the year. For example, the first meeting will be about THON Committee Members who are selected in early October.

If someone does not wish to participate in the meeting-style discussion, there will be an option to submit an anonymous form instead. This form will be parallel to the agenda items for that week's roundtable and include questions relevant to the conversation.

More information regarding the first THON Community Roundtable will be available in mid-September.

### **Code of Conduct & Rulebook Language:**

- ❖ Suspected misconduct of any THON Volunteer can be reported via:
  - The Anonymous Misconduct Report Form found [here](#).
  - An email or phone call made to any captain or member of the [Executive Committee](#).
- ❖ The misconduct reporting and investigation process will be as follows:
  - All reports of misconduct will be reviewed, and contact will be made to schedule a meeting to discuss misconduct within three academic days of reporting.

- All reports of misconduct will be reviewed by at least two members of the Executive Committee and the THON Staff Advisor.
- If a misconduct report concerns a member of the Executive Committee, the report will be reviewed by the Executive Director and the THON Advisor. If the report is regarding the Executive Director, it will be reviewed by the THON Advisor and other staff in Penn State Student Affairs.
- An initial meeting will be held with alleged offender. A decision will not be made during this first meeting.
- A follow up conversation/meeting will be held with reporter if not anonymous.
- A second meeting will be held with alleged offender and at least two members of the Executive Committee. A verdict will be decided upon by at least two members of the Executive Committee and next steps will be outlined.
- ❖ All suspected violations of the Penn State University Code of Conduct that THON becomes aware of will also be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Student Affairs. For additional resources or to reporting suspected misconduct by a Penn State Student or Organization, visit [reporting.psu.edu](http://reporting.psu.edu).
- ❖ The Executive Committee reserves the right to remove any volunteer for any conduct that is determined to be outside of THON's values with a majority vote by the Executive Committee.

### **THON's Organizational Values:**

- 1) **Service:** Providing emotional and financial support for the fight against childhood cancer to the fullest extent.
- 2) **Community:** Respecting, supporting, and uplifting all members of the THON Community: students, alumni, and supporters alike.
- 3) **Adaptability:** Responding to any and all challenge with integrity, spirit, and collaboration in order to uphold THON's mission.