

---

# Special Event Guidelines: Serving Alcohol

---

No amount of monitoring and enforcement can make up for poor event planning, especially when it comes to alcohol, regardless of the size of your special event. Problems at an event are not usually caused by one factor, but a combination of factors. Giving full attention to the role of alcohol in planning, policies and procedures for your event will help minimize the associated risks.

Consider the following guidelines when you are developing an alcohol service plan for your events:

- Review local and state laws regarding the sale and consumption of alcohol. You may need to obtain a special license or permit from a local government agency to serve alcohol during your event.
- Confirm with the venue that serving alcohol is permitted and ask about any additional requirements that may be necessary (i.e., licensed bartender, someone checking identification, limiting the time liquor can be served, etc.)
- Determine who will be serving the alcohol.

### **Volunteer**

- Maturity and reliability is imperative to having these individuals make good decisions in their role. Consider requiring all volunteers to be 25 years old or older.

### **Third Party Vendor**

- If a third party vendor is used, make sure that your contract with that vendor contains contract provisions which transfer the risk to them. These provisions should include indemnification and require the vendor to name your organization as an Additional Insured on their general liability insurance policy.
- Require individuals serving alcohol during your event to complete an alcohol server intervention program. You should check with your state Alcoholic Beverage Control Board first to determine if they require certain courses, or offer courses for reduced rates. When training through a vendor, ensure that their courses meet your state's requirements.
  - Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS®) – [www.gettips.com](http://www.gettips.com)
  - Controlling Alcohol Risks Effectively (CARE®) – [www.ahlei.org/Programs/Alcohol-Awareness/](http://www.ahlei.org/Programs/Alcohol-Awareness/)
  - Techniques of Alcohol Management (TAM®) – [www.tamusa.org](http://www.tamusa.org)
  - Responsible Serving Certification – [www.servercertificationcorp.com](http://www.servercertificationcorp.com)
- Signage (depending on the size and location of your event)
  - Place prominent signage at the venue entrance, stating the rules about general personal conduct and alcohol in particular.
  - Inside your event, clearly visible signs about identification and drink limits will help your servers (who are often volunteers) adhere to the policies you have established.

- Serve alcohol via a “cash bar” or provide a set number of tickets per guest/attendee.
- Restrict consumption to a designated, roped-off area (large events; multi-activity events; large venue).
- Always offer non-alcoholic alternatives.
- Always serve food. If your guests are drinking on an empty stomach, the alcohol will impact them harder and faster. Stay away from foods that are salty, greasy or very sweet.
- Develop controls to ensure under age and intoxicated guests aren’t served.

### **Under Age**

- Consider limiting your guests to only those that are over 21. If so, be sure to clearly state this in any promotion you do and print it on any tickets for the event.
- During the event, be sure all public entrances are manned by your staff/volunteers, that tickets are presented and I.D. is checked for anyone who looks under the age of 25. Do not allow any exceptions.
- If you will have minors at your event, require that all persons 21 and older wear nontransferable wristbands.

### **Intoxicated Guests**

- Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself with an intoxicated guest. Prior to your event, you should develop a written strategy for handling this situation, should it occur.
- Your first line of defense is the bartender. Let them be the heavy and cut off the guest.
- If an intoxicated guest becomes unruly, you have a definite problem on your hands. You can quietly ask them to tone it down or to leave. You can appeal to their companion(s) to talk to them or to take them home.
- Designate a person to be the bouncer for the event or consider hiring a security service for your event.
- Set a “Last Call” an hour before the event ends to lessen the likelihood of an intoxicated guest getting into a vehicle. Serve more food and non-alcoholic drinks towards the end of your event.
- Ensure any intoxicated guests make it home from your event safely.
  - Promote Designated Driving
    - ◆ Encourage designated drivers by providing them with free nonalcoholic beverages, food, door prizes or special incentives.
    - ◆ Provide designated drivers with a wristband for easy identification.
  - Use a Safe Ride Home Program (many communities have an established program with local sponsors)
  - Make advance arrangements with a local cab company for free/reduced fare rides home.

Accountability in nonprofit organizations is more than a good stewardship of funds. It includes delivering our products and services while protecting people and property.

We believe that risk management is the cornerstone of accountability in any organization. To support that belief and to help our member-insureds avoid claims, we offer a wide range of educational and loss prevention resources highly subsidized or free of charge. Visit the Member Resource area of our website for more information on all of the resources available to you.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact our Director of Loss Control at 800-359-6422 or via email at [losscontrol@insuranceforprofits.org](mailto:losscontrol@insuranceforprofits.org)