

## COMPANY PARTY ALCOHOL POLICY

Does your company have a published policy on alcohol consumption at company events? Every year, companies lose valuable employees due to misconduct related to alcohol consumption at company events. This unfortunate circumstance is avoidable with a clearly communicated policy that is easily enforceable.

For many employees, the first corporate event with an open bar and free alcohol is a privilege they may not be ready for. No longer in college or at a family bar-b-que, some employees do not know their limit for alcohol, or how to control their “party” behavior in a professional setting. When such a lapse in judgment leads to engagement in a terminable offense, both the company and the employee risk negative impact.

To begin with, most companies have employees as young as 18 years old, and most states have a legal drinking age of 21 years old. It is strongly recommended that you do not serve alcohol to underage employees at any company function, as in doing so; your company is assuming responsibility for their illegal action. Your company policy should clearly state that any employee under the legal drinking age who is caught drinking alcohol at a company function will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including possible termination. More importantly, your policy should clearly state that any employee who serves alcohol to an underage employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including possible termination.

Of course, underage drinking is not the only issue to avoid at company functions. You want all your employees to have a good time, and to enjoy the celebration you have provided. A practice that I have suggested and implemented in the past (which has been highly successful) is what I call “Designated Manager”. Basically, I believe that managers should be the last people to leave a party. As long as junior team members are still at an event, and still drinking alcohol, a manager must remain as the eyes and ears of the company. A manager who leaves so that the more junior employees can “cut lose” is truly asking for trouble. A more experienced and seasoned professional will be able to respectfully cut someone off and arrange for safe passage home. Do not allow any employee who appears under the influence to drive themselves or any other employee from the event.

Let me say a word about the “Designated Manager”. As the title suggests, this person is in a designated role to ensure other people’s well-being. So, if they can abstain at the

function in question, that is preferable. If they wish to have one celebratory drink, so be it, but like a designated driver, the “Designated Manager” is essentially working the party. Like a designated driver, I suggest rotating the “Designated Manager” responsibility among several responsible individuals, so that no one manager has the responsibility at every function. There are ample opportunities for management to celebrate. This is an opportunity to show appreciation for the entire staff, and management needs to promote a safe environment while employees enjoy the event.

For more information, or for answers to any questions, contact:

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