

# From BBQs To Boundaries: Summer Event Tips Every Employer Should Know



Summer's here, and that means it's prime time for employers to host company events and socials. Whether it's a laid-back BBQ, outdoor picnic or taking advantage of patio season, these events are an excellent way to boost morale, encourage team-bonding, and allow everyone to socialize outside of the office. However, it's important for employers to acknowledge the risks associated with these events, such as safety, alcohol consumption, and inclusivity and accessibility, in order to strike the right balance between fun and responsibility.

Employers must remember that both the *Human Rights Code* and Occupational Health and Safety legislation in many Canadian jurisdictions create statutory obligations on employers to ensure a safe workplace for their employees, and that obligation doesn't end at the office door. These obligations include ensuring alcohol is served responsibly, taking reasonable steps to ensure employees and guests are protected against injuries, and ensuring events are a harassment-free environment. Essentially, an employer's workplace responsibilities extend outside of just the office.

To avoid such liabilities, CCPartners has compiled a list of suggested "best practices" to assist your organization in planning and hosting a safe and inclusive summer event:

1. Remind employees of workplace policies and that they still apply to events. This means there's an expectation to behave in a manner that abides by workplace policies, and isn't considered harassing, discriminatory, intimidating or otherwise inappropriate.
2. Consider distributing your workplace policies to all employees in advance and have them sign off that they have read and understood same.
3. Be mindful of different religious and cultural backgrounds. This should be reflected when scheduling an event date, choosing menu options, and selecting activities.
4. Plan activities that are accessible for everyone to participate, regardless of physical ability or age.
5. Choose a suitable venue that's safe, accessible, and appropriate for all employees.
6. Monitor the weather closely and have a plan that accommodates the weather, such as tents for outdoors or an indoor backup plan in the event of rain or extreme heat.
7. Encourage dressing appropriately for the weather conditions, such as wearing

hats, sunglasses and light clothing.

8. Offer inclusive food options that accommodate dietary restrictions, such as foods that are vegan, halal, gluten-free, etc.
9. Hold an alcohol-free and cannabis-free event, as this is low-risk for employers.
10. If alcohol is to be served at the event, hire licensed bartenders, consider drink limits, and have a discussion with employees prior to the event about the risks of over-drinking.
11. If alcohol is to be served at the event, provide non-alcoholic alternatives to promote moderation and ensure inclusivity for those who don't consume alcohol.
12. Offer safe transportation options to prevent impaired driving, such as arranging taxis, rideshares or reimbursements.
13. Designate sober contacts and supervisors that are on duty to monitor behaviour.
14. Allow employees to opt out of events without a consequence or negative connotation.
15. Encourage employees to provide feedback after the event to determine what could be improved on for future events.

While summer workplace events are a fun way to bring the team together, they're not without their responsibilities. By planning thoughtfully, keeping safety and inclusivity in mind, and understanding your legal obligations as an employer, you can throw a light-hearted summer event that everyone can enjoy.

*The content of this article is intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter. Specialist advice should be sought about your specific circumstances.*

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