

Company-Sponsored Social Events Policy

While they may be vital to morale and team building, company-sponsored holiday parties, picnics, outings and other social events are also a liability nightmare, especially when alcohol is served. The first step in managing these liability risks is to establish a set of ground rules for employee behaviour during such events. To help you, we've gathered a number of top of the line policies from companies in Canada, the U.S., Europe and even Australia and combined their best features into a template that you can adapt to fit the circumstances of your own organization. We've also added a section addressing social events held at work premises that are not company-sponsored, e.g., birthdays or baby showers.

COMPANY SOCIAL EVENTS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish ground rules for behaviour during employee social events and functions, including both company-sponsored and unsponsored events.

2. SCOPE

As used in this Policy:

“Company-sponsored social events” refers to holiday parties, picnics, receptions, dinners, outings and other social or recreational events that Company ABC (“Company”) holds for employees during the year to express its appreciation for their contribution and foster company-wide collegiality and morale, including events that are:

- Held on- and off-Company premises;
- Held during regular business hours and on nights and weekends;
- Limited to employee and to which employees’ families and guests, company’ clients and other associates are also invited.

“Unsponsored social events” refers to social or recreational events or functions held on Company premises during regular business hours for employees to celebrate special events such as birthdays, baby showers and retirements that are not organized, staged or funded by the Company.

3. PLANNING OF COMPANY-SPONSORED SOCIAL EVENTS

Responsibility for creating, proposing, planning and staging Company-sponsored social events will be exercised by the ABC Company Social Events Planning Committee consisting of *[list, e.g., the HR Director and employee volunteers]* in accordance with the following procedure: *[set out an event planning procedure and chain of command that makes sense for your own organization.]*

4. PLANNING OF UNSPONSORED SOCIAL EVENTS

Planning, organization and staging of unsponsored social events must be carried out by employees on a volunteer-basis. The following ground rules apply when such events are to be held on Company premises:

- Events must be held during regular business hours and limited to special occasions;

- Events requiring reservation of conference rooms, departmental areas or other space in which operations are carried out must be organized and approved at least [__ days] in advance;
- Company funds will not be available to pay for such events, subject to exceptions the Company may make at its sole discretion;
- Alcohol may not be served at such events;
- The Company accepts no responsibility or liability for unsponsored events regardless of where they are held.

5. EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT AT SOCIAL EVENTS

5.1 Attendance Is Voluntary

Company-sponsored social events are held for social and recreational purposes. Attendance and participation is strictly voluntary. **Failure to attend a Company-sponsored event will result in no recriminations, repurcussions, reprisals or negative consequences of any kind.**

Employees who believe they have been subject to such recriminations, repurcussions, reprisals or negative consequences for not attending a Company-sponsored event must notify their supervisor, manager, the HR department or another ABC Company official immediately.

5.2 Code of Conduct

Employees must behave appropriately and professionally at all social events, whether sponsored or unsponsored, on-site or off-site, during or after regular business hours. Employees are reminded that the Company Code of Employee Conduct and Policies apply at all such events, including but not limited to policies banning workplace sexual harassment, discrimination, violence and bullying and that conduct that is not acceptable in the workplace will also not be acceptable at social events.

5.3 Apparel

Employees must comply with the Company workplace dress code, including but not limited to the prohibition on sexually suggestive or revealing clothing, in deciding what to wear for Company-sponsored social events, keeping in mind that they will be with co-workers, vendors and clients. Costumes shall not be required but may be permitted for certain social events, as will be indicated on the invitation.

5.3 Smoking

Smoking will not be permitted within the party site; however, where reasonable, designated outdoor smoking areas will be made available for smokers.

6. SERVING OF ALCOHOL

The following rules apply to Company-sponsored social events at which alcohol is served (remember that alcohol may not be served at unsponsored events held on Company premises):

- The manager with ultimate authority over the function where alcohol is served or invitees participating in it is responsible for ensuring employees behave appropriately and in compliance with Company policies;
- Alcohol may be served and consumed only in designated areas or rooms such as dining rooms, lounges and cafeterias;
- Self-serving of alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited—employees must have drinks served to them and may not help themselves;
- Off-site events will be held in appropriately licensed facilities, with drinks served by professional bartenders;
- Food must be available where alcohol is served;
- Alcoholic beverages will be served for a restricted period (generally no more than 2 hours), subject to exceptions the Company may make at its sole discretion;
- Alcohol service will end no less than one hour prior to the end of the event; and
- Alcohol may not be served to minors or anyone who appears to be impaired.

7. DRINKING & DRIVING

Employees must obey the law and not drink and drive. They are also encouraged to take steps to look out for their co-workers and guests and ensure that they do not drink and drive. If an employee knows or suspects that a person is intoxicated, he or she should confront the individual. But if the employee is not comfortable with that, he or she must notify the monitor or manager in charge. The individual who is impaired should be asked to leave the event. If necessary, the Company will make arrangements for the individual's safe transportation. If the individual refuses to leave in such transportation, the monitor or manager in charge should immediately notify the authorities. In no event should the individual be permitted to drive himself/herself from the event.

8. VIOLATIONS

Employees who violate any of the above rules will be subject to discipline under the Company's disciplinary procedure, up to and including summary dismissal for serious offences which may include, without limitation, excessive drunkenness, the use or distribution of illegal drugs, unlawful or inappropriate harassment, violence, serious verbal abuse, bullying, fighting or assault.