

How to Lower Your Liquor Liability

Contributed by Michael Monheit
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Whether you're hosting a company party, wedding, neighborhood picnic, or any event where alcohol is served — remember — when an employee or guest drives away and causes an accident, the person who served the liquor is just as guilty as the driver behind the wheel. The surviving family members will sue for damages naming everyone associated with the event — the company or organization, the hosting facility, the caterer, etc.

The best way to lower your liquor liability is to not serve any. However, sometimes and most times, that is not an option. Here are some steps you can take to keep employees or attendees from overindulging. Verify that vendors are licensed and insured. If you hire a vendor, such as a hotel or caterer, to sell or serve alcohol for your event, make sure that the vendor is compliant with state and local licensing and insurance regulations. Under no circumstances should your staff purchase and serve alcohol. Yes, you may cut costs but in the end you increase liability.

Your contract should stipulate that servers be training in safe alcohol service and recognize when people have overindulged as well as prevent intoxication.

Remind attendees to drink responsibly and exercise good judgment. Let them know that they will not be able to get behind the wheel of their car and drive off and that taxi services or a designated driver will take them home.

Purchase a liquor liability insurance policy by obtaining an additional rider from your insurance company then add an indemnification clause.

The most proactive thinking is to prevent your guests from becoming intoxicated in the first place. Try on these tips for size: Hire fewer bartenders so it takes longer to get drinks. Limit the number of hours for the event; the longer the event, the more time guests have to get drunk. Serve drinks to guests rather than self-serve. If you have a cash bar, don't price alcohol too low because that encourages heavy drinking. Serve a lot of free food and have it readily available when the drinking begins. Remember that salty food causes thirst. Provide a wide range of no-alcohol and low-alcohol drinks. Station the bar not in the flight path of everything else. Don't play games or contests with alcoholic beverages. Check IDs of people under 21. Insist the bartender use a jigger. Do not circulate through the crowd refilling drinks. Close the bar well before the end of the party.

Protect yourself, your company, and your property by serving alcohol responsibly.

Have you been injured from a DUI accident? You may be eligible for a big settlement. Contact the Pennsylvania law firm of Anapol Schwartz to find out what your legal options are.

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