

Keeping Your Special Event Festive and Safe

A Planning Guide for Napa County

The Napa Valley hosts a variety of special events throughout the year. As alcohol service is often a component, careful planning is needed to ensure that special events remain enjoyable and safe.

SPECIAL EVENTS IN NAPA VALLEY

Many special events are held in Napa Valley each year. Events vary in their design, size, and focus. Among them are holiday celebrations such as the holiday parades; downtown bazaars and festivals; fundraisers for non-profit agencies; and annual events that attract residents and visitors. Organized by local chambers of commerce, service clubs, non-profit agencies, schools, and civic groups, these events attract local residents and tourists to the region each year and are essential to the local economy.

While the majority of event participants will act responsibly, the consumption, or potential over-consumption of alcohol can sometimes cause a wide range of problems. In addition to extra clean-up costs, these may include irresponsible, dangerous and sometimes illegal activities. Fights, property damage and DUI-related incidents are just a few examples. Moreover, the easy availability of alcohol at events where youth are present tends to increase the incidence of underage drinking. This can lead to a host of negative consequences, many of which can have long-lasting impacts on the individual as well as the community.

Many of these problems can be prevented through careful event planning.

SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING

This planning guide contains event planning strategies developed by experts in the field of hospitality as well as public health. It is intended to provide event organizers, city leaders, enforcement agencies and volunteers with proven policies and procedures that can mitigate problems related to



Special events in Napa Valley often feature “table wine”, a “hosted bar” and specialty drinks to entice attendees.

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alcohol consumption while maintaining a festive spirit of celebration. Given the wide variety of events in Napa County, this guide is intended to be a general planning guide that can meet the needs of event planners involved in a range of events.

Alcohol Availability

The first decision to make when planning an event is whether to include the sale and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages. Contrary to the beliefs of many event organizers, event attendance is not dependent on alcohol availability. Many people prefer the safe and secure environment that is assured when alcohol is not allowed on the premises. In addition to preventing potential dangers and risks, a decision to hold an alcohol-free event also sends a message to youth participants that alcohol is not necessary to have a good time.

Sponsors for alcohol-free events are many and varied. They could include local restaurants, coffee shops, faith-based groups and foundations as well as juice and bottled water companies.

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On the other hand, if the decision is made to include alcohol in your event, effectively addressing each of the following components will help mitigate the risks. First and foremost, identify a designated area such as a Beer or Wine Garden where this activity will take place. This area should have designated



Thousands attend this alcohol-free celebration which is held annually in Imperial Beach, CA.

hours of operation and occupant capacity.

Second, take adequate steps to ensure alcohol consumption is limited to this specific area and that no one under the age of 21 is allowed to enter. This includes having volunteers or professional security personnel posted at all entrances and exits to check identification. Personnel should also ensure that the area does not become overcrowded and that alcohol is not transported to unauthorized areas.

Third, there should be adequate fencing or barriers, no less than six feet in height, surrounding this area. The fencing should be of chain link or other material that will allow clear visibility of the interior. Some cities require organizers to maintain a 10-foot perimeter around the beer garden to prevent youth access to alcohol. Appropriate signage should also be placed at the entrance to any designated areas.

Responsible Beverage Service

In addition to limiting alcohol consumption to a specific area, organizers should also ensure that those who serve alcoholic beverages are trained in methods

RESPONSIBLE BEVERAGE SERVICE

Implementing the following RBS strategies will help ensure that underage drinking and over service of alcohol do not occur at your event.

- Check identification for every alcohol sale and for all customers appearing to be under the age of 25.
- Restrict alcohol sales to a designated location where underage youth are not allowed. Include see-through fencing around the area with security personnel at each entrance and exit.
- Do not sell alcohol at unusually low prices or for a single fee that covers unlimited drinking.
- Limit the number of servings to one ID and one drink per purchase.
- Limit cup size to 12 ounces for beer and wine coolers and 5 oz. for wine.
- Offer food and beverage options.
- Prohibit staff members or volunteers from drinking during the event.
- Do NOT Provide alcoholic beverages to anyone appearing to be intoxicated.
- Intoxicated attendees should be removed from the service area.
- Stop alcohol service at least one hour before the end of the event.
- Make plans using volunteers or local taxi companies to drive home attendees who have had too much to drink.
- Make sure those who serve alcohol have received Responsible Beverage Service training. Contact the Napa County Alcohol and Drug Services Division at (707) 253-4724

of responsible beverage service (RBS.) Such training is designed to help servers identify fake IDs and respond appropriately, recognize situations in which adults are buying alcohol for underage youth, monitor number of drinks consumed and refuse service to those who are intoxicated or underage. It can also help event staff understand liability issues and how

to handle problems such as rowdy attendees.

According to recent research on alcohol sales at community festivals, decoys acting as underage and intoxicated buyers were able to purchase alcohol at high rates, 50 and 89 percent respectively. However, when combined with adequate enforcement, RBS training has been shown to be effective in changing serving practices and reducing resulting problems such as drinking and driving and underage drinking.^{1, 2, 3}

Sponsorship & Advertising

Since fundraising is the goal of many community events and festivals, it can be tempting for organizers to seek support from the alcohol industry in the form of sponsorships and/or advertising. Depending on the size of the event, manufacturers or distributors of beer, wine and distilled spirits are often willing to sponsor such events, providing financial support in return for promotions and advertising space. Sponsorship agreements may also involve naming rights for the event and/or the distribution of promotional items (such as t-shirts, flashlights, etc.) with the sponsor's logo. In some cases alcohol company logos or symbols can be predominant, displayed on large banners or on huge inflatable items to promote a particular brand and product.

Such messages can be highly effective for the alcohol industry in increasing sales, but they can be misleading in that they often fail to mention any of the risks of alcohol consumption. Since exposure to alcohol advertising has been shown to increase underage drinking, most experts agree that alcohol industry sponsorship is inappropriate for events open to youth.⁴ If funds from alcohol-related businesses are needed to support the event, organizers should consider banning the distribution of alcohol promotional items and limiting the places where signs with an

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alcohol sponsor's name can be displayed.

In addition to regulating the sponsorship of an event, organizers should consider event advertising and promotions that focus on the community. Organizers should avoid highlighting alcohol consumption as being a key element of the event and associating the name of the event with an alcohol-related business.

Sales of Drug Paraphernalia and Drugwear

The sale of drug paraphernalia and “drugwear” such as t-shirts with marijuana leaves that promote drug culture is a growing trend. Event organizers can adopt policies that prohibit the sale of drug paraphernalia and drug wear at vendor booths.

Security & Enforcement

Consistent enforcement of policies and procedures is essential to a safe and successful event. Event staff should be able to enforce most rules and regulations, but having a local police presence can also be helpful, especially at large events. Like alcohol servers, security personnel should have appropriate training and be involved in planning for crowd control well in advance of the actual event.

The physical layout of the event site is also an important part of security. This includes making sure there are an adequate number of parking spaces, sufficient lighting, safe walking paths and plenty of signs directing visitors to the festivities. In order to maintain a clean and safe environment, an appropriate number of trash receptacles and adequate restroom facilities should also be maintained.

Assessment & Event Improvement

In addition to planning and training of personnel prior to the event, a Special Event Risk Assessment should be conducted on the day of the event. This includes a thorough evaluation of the physical layout, security arrangements and alcohol serving practices that have been put into place. Advertising and

promotional practices can also be reviewed. When conducted by trained personnel, this kind of assessment can give event organizers valuable insight into how well policies and procedures were followed and what kind of changes might be needed for the future. To help ensure that problems are avoided, a risk management checklist should also be completed prior to the event, as part of the planning process. Napa County Health and Human Services offers risk management planning and assessment training to

For more information or to request assistance with minimizing risk at your event, contact the

**HHS Alcohol and Drug Services Division
Phone: (707) 253-4724**

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REFERENCES

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To find out more about Responsible Beverage Service and DUI Prevention, please visit the Napa County CLEAR Coalition at: www.SoberDriverNapaValley.com