Planning A Safe Staff Christmas Party

Don't let your staff Christmas party turn into a work related incident.

Successful Christmas parties have been knownto help build staff moral and provide an opportunity to thank our staff fortheir efforts and accomplishments for the year in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.Unfortunately Christmas parties do have the tendency tohost, instigate or aggravate staff issues and can result in alcohol relatedinjuries and misconduct.

Under the current OHS and EEO legislation, functions such asChristmas parties regardless of where they are held are still classed as a workfunction. Therefore employers need to be aware that their OHS and EEObligations are the same as if they were back in the workplace.

Any incidents that occur during and sometimes after thefunction can be the employers responsibility and can result in the employerbeing liable for claims relating to; sexual harassment, discrimination,workplace bullying and harassment and workers compensation claims.

To help our readers we have some tips and advice to considerwhen planning your staff Christmas party that will assist in reducing theprobability of the above issues occurring.

PLANNINGAttendeesConsider inviting partners or having a familyday, this will help control any excessive drinking and we are generally betterbehaved when our family is around.It is also likely that more people willattend as they will not have to arrange child care.Consider making it invite only, this willreduce the temptation of people assuming they are invited and gate crashingi.e. those no longer employed or sub-contractors.VenueConsider your venue carefully; avoid holdingit at the office. Think of a venue that creates an atmosphere you will all becomfortable in, this could be the park, local restaurant or club.TimingConsider the time of day you hold thefunction, lunch time is often better than evening and be strict on start andfinish times, ensuring times are stated on the invitations.FoodProvide some type of food either a meal orfinger food such as tapas. This will help relax people but also help slow down thealcohol consumption. AlcoholIm not aware of any rule that says we haveto serve alcohol at a staff Christmas party, it is just expected. If you doplan to have an alcohol free party ensure people are aware of it prior to theevent.Alternatively if you are serving alcohol,consider either restricting the amount of drinks or the strength of drinksavailable and always have alternatives to alcohol available such as soft drink and water.EEO Try not to discriminate against those withfood allergies, who dont drink alcohol or who dont celebrate Christmas. Iknow of some organisations that now call their Christmas party an End of YearParty to ensure all employees feel welcome to attend regardless of theirreligious preference. Consider providing transport, cab vouchers oruse a venue that has complementary transport to ensure employees get homesafely.

PRIORRevisit Policies

A few days prior to the Christmas party revisit policies such asdrugs and alcohol, code of conduct and harassment with all staff, remindingthem that these are to be complied to at all work functions including theChristmas party.

Make it clear that misconduct atthe Christmas party could result in disciplinary action, including demotion ordismissal. And that if an employee is asked to leave by the employer due tointoxication, the employee must leave. Some organisations also include thisinformation on the invitations.

Resolve Known IssuesWhere possible resolve any known staff issues prior tothe party as these could end up unsightly once alcohol is added to the mix.DURINGEnsure alcohol is being served responsibly and that underagestaff are not served alcohol, managers should set an example by behaving anddrinking responsibly. Additionally it is always good to have at least oneperson remain sober to supervise.

WHATIF AN INCIDENT OCCURSIf an incident does occur or claims of misconduct behavior are reported, it is important that you request for anyone who may beinvolved to leave (if appropriate). It is important to follow your usualinvestigation and disciplinary process thoroughly before action is taken.However avoid trying to discipline anyone or investigate the problem at theparty, deal with the incident when everyone is sober and back at the workplace.

Contacts

Kylie Dowell
0408471570
mailto: info@dowellsolutions.com.au