



Health Promotion Kit for Events with Alcohol

Created by UCR Healthy Campus, Substance Use and Addiction Subcommittee

For whom is this kit?

Organizers of alcohol-permitted events at UCR.

What is the purpose of the kit?

This kit provides practical tips and information about existing resources for promoting a culture of health at alcohol-permitted events.

What is a culture of health?

Healthy Campus encourages the university, as an institution, and its members to adopt a culture of health. A culture of health recognizes that the way we do things - whether it be teaching, learning, researching, or otherwise working - impacts on health at both the individual and institutional levels. Institutions that enable the health of their people enable their people to perform better and, in turn, advance the institution and enjoy cost savings.

A culture of health operates in two ways: by creating a healthy context and establishing healthy norms. First, the university creates a context that promotes health by providing campus community members with healthy choices. For example, if the university creates an attractive stairway rather than leaving it to be used solely in case of emergencies, it promotes stair usage, a healthier option than elevator usage for many community members. People who can are more likely to take the stairs if the stairwells are inviting and safe. People retain the ability to make their own choice about how to ascend a building, but the university provides healthy choices for doing so.

Second, the university establishes healthy norms. Through messaging (i.e., social marketing), modeling by campus leaders, and incentive structures that reward actions promoting a culture-of-health, the campus community learns that the institution views health as a shared value, more than something that is good for individuals alone. For example, a campus leader can model healthy work-life balance by not sending emails on the weekend or by conducting walking meetings. Furthermore, the university can, through personnel evaluations, reward community members who cultivate a healthy workplace or employ healthy pedagogy. Once norms are established, community members come to expect, appreciate, and make healthy choices and, in turn, health improves. For example, a community member who conducts a moving (e.g., walking) meeting benefits their own health and benefits the health of the people with whom they conduct the meeting.

In the context of alcohol-permitted events, a culture of health is reflected in event organization that not only manages risk but also promotes health -- for example, by providing an event context in which healthy choices are available and supported and in which diverse guests feel included in the event. Obtaining an alcohol permit is a way to manage risk. This kit provides ways to promote health and be inclusive of the members of our diverse community.

Myths about substance use at events

- **Myth:** We know the people who attend our events and would know if there was a problem with substance use.
- **Reality:** We don't know whether any of the people who come to our events have, or are at risk for, an addictive disorder. Many symptoms of addictive disorders are invisible – especially in the earlier stages of the disease. Stigma causes many people to hide the severity of their illness. Furthermore, we don't know who or how many people at the event will plan to drink alcohol. Some of our guests may abstain for various reasons, such as recovery, health, or religion. We should assume that our event may include people with addictive disorders and/or people who don't drink, as well as people who drink.

- **Myth:** The people who attend our events are highly educated and unlikely to fall prey to either problem drinking or addictive disorders.
- **Reality:** Problem drinking and addictive disorders can affect anyone, regardless of education, income or profession.

- **Myth:** Only undergraduate students engage in risky alcohol consumption.
- **Reality:** Faculty, staff, and graduate students are also capable of engaging in risky alcohol consumption. The rate of substance misuse is higher among youth aged 12-22 years, but one in every seven adults suffers from a substance use disorder at some time in their lives.

- **Myth:** People who misuse alcohol simply need more willpower.
- **Reality:** People who are at risk for or have addictive disorders are affected by family genetics, trauma, and environment, just as people with diabetes and people with heart disease are. Addiction causes changes to the brain, creating a severe physical dependency combined with an inability to make reasonable decisions. Thus, relying on willpower for safety is unwise. In addition, context can influence the choices people make, whether or not they have an addictive disorder. It is important not to rely solely on individuals to promote safety and health. Event organizers should provide event conditions that promote safety and health for drinkers and nondrinkers alike.

- **Myth:** People who want to drink at an event must be accommodated.
- **Reality:** All guests at an event can and should be reasonably accommodated. People who drink do not have greater right to an event than people who do not drink. Moreover, an event should not threaten the health of people who do not drink or, for that matter, any event attendee.

- **Myth:** Alcohol makes events better.
- **Reality:** The impact of alcohol at an event is not necessarily universally positive. The presence of alcohol may add value, but it also produces risk. If the risks of alcohol are well managed and the needs of nondrinkers are adequately addressed, alcohol can be

included in an event without compromising the health and safety of participants. Also, events without alcohol can also be successful.

- **Myth:** Water is a sufficient alternative for non-alcohol drinkers.
- **Reality:** It may be sufficient if it is the only drink available to all event attendees. Otherwise, event attendees should have an array of beverage choices. To ensure equity, if water and alcohol are available for drinkers, water and an alternative, non-alcoholic beverage(s) should be available to non-drinkers.

- **Myth:** If there is a substance-use related problem at an event, we could recognize and handle it.
- **Reality:** Some problem users function effectively; they are called functional alcoholics because their behavior does not reveal their problem. Furthermore, a person in recovery may relapse at an event, but the relapse would be known only to attendees who knew the person was in recovery. Event organizers will not have full information and may miss problematic behavior. They should not rely solely on individual strategies; they should also employ environmental strategies. And these strategies should address the risks faced by people in recovery and non-drinkers, not just those of drinkers.

Planning considerations for alcohol-permitted events

Beverage choices

- Provide non-alcoholic drink options that are comparable to alcoholic drink options -- that is, provide creative and tempting non-alcoholic options as well as options from top-quality non-alcoholic brands.
- For a list of recommended healthy beverages, refer to the Healthy Meeting and Events Guide (https://hr.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rwecm656/files/2019-09/whw-resources_healthy-meeting-events-guide_updated_august_2019.pdf).
- Consider displaying at the event the Map of Filtered Water Stations on Campus: <https://ucrgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=2d9f207477cc4dbb955d09769a136e30>. It may be helpful to guests who prefer to bring their own water bottle for sustainability purposes.

Beverage service and placement

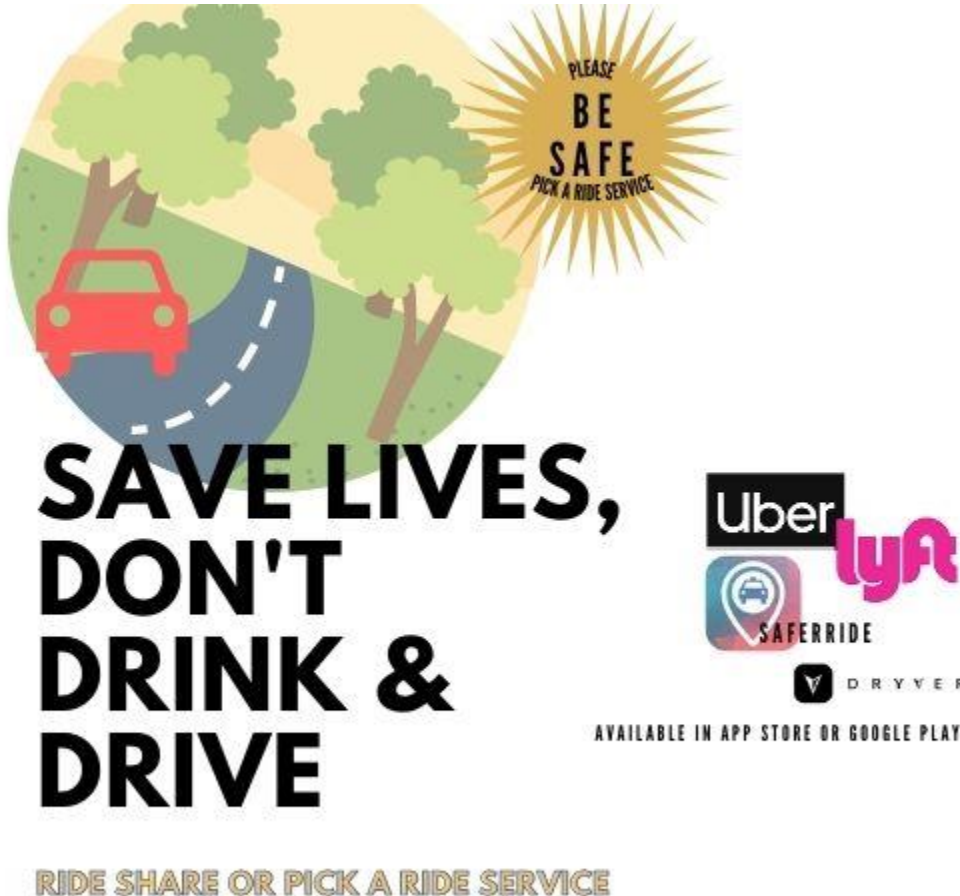
- Provide a menu of non-alcoholic drinks.
- Provide identical drinkware - same type of glass or cup regardless of whether the drink is alcoholic or non-alcoholic. This allows non-drinkers to blend in.
- Serve alcoholic drinks at a table or bar separate from the table or bar serving non-alcoholic drinks.
- Restrict alcoholic beverage service to a time-limited portion of the event (e.g., social hour).
- For large events, assign alcohol beverage service and consumption to a controlled area (much the way a bar functions in a restaurant). This allows for the main event area to be alcohol free. If both indoor and outdoor space are available, designate one space to be alcohol free.
- If guests will be seated at tables,
 - Designate alcohol-free tables, allowing abstaining guests to distance themselves from drinking guests, if desired.
 - Limit alcoholic beverage service to the bar
 - If providing assigned seating, ask guests about their seating preference (alcohol-free table or not) when they RSVP to the event.

Reference to beverages

- In event advertising avoid beverage-specific language to describe an event (e.g., cocktail hour or happy hour) and instead, use beverage-neutral language (e.g., social hour).
- Ask event hosts/masters of ceremony and servers to avoid beverage-specific language (e.g., “Help yourself to some wine.” “Can I get you another beer?”) and instead use beverage-neutral language (e.g., “What can I get you?”).
- Consider replacing a traditional toast with an alternative way of honoring a person or achievement (e.g., clapping or standing ovation).
- For additional guidance refer to the Best Practices for Health Promotion Messaging: https://well.ucr.edu/sites/g/files/rcwecm1846/files/2020-12/Best%20Practices%20for%20Health%20Promotion%20Messages_0.pdf. It is also available on The Well’s webpage: <https://well.ucr.edu/about/about-the-well>.

Safety

- Display at the event information about ride services for guests who are unable to drive due to alcohol consumption at the event, such as in the form of the Ride Service Placard (below).



- Display at the event information about the Campus Safety Escort Service (CSES) for guests who wish to safely walk home or to their car: (<https://wrc.ucr.edu/programs/campus-safety-escort-service>. Include the CSES logo (below) and/or its Instagram handle (@ucr_cses) in the event's promotional materials.



Inclusion

- Consider whether alcohol is necessary at the event. Some people may not attend an event precisely because there is alcohol present. If your event is part of a series, consider including some alcohol-free events in the series to accommodate such people.
- To avoid a reliance on alcohol consumption to facilitate social interaction among guests, consider how guests are encouraged to attend and participate in the event. For example, highlight in the event advertising the non-alcoholic benefits of the event, such as social networking. At the event designate a person to make introductions among guests. Provide guests with name tags to facilitate meeting new people and have icebreakers to build community among guests and reduce social anxiety.
- Display on event advertising and at the event the Sober-Friendly Event placard (below). A Sober-Friendly Event is one that is intentionally designed and mindfully planned to be sensitive to and inclusive of people who do not drink for whatever reason, including people in recovery from addictive disorders and people who do not or cannot consume alcohol for other reasons.

