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OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY

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It's that time of year again - and here comes the bah humbug HR advice about festive celebrations. Organisations should remember that workplace rules on conduct and discipline extend to social gatherings.

Christmas parties can be a fun experience for all involved, providing opportunity for Employers to reward and engage with their workforce. However, they can also be the cause of significant issues if not managed properly and believe me as an HR Consultant I have had to deal with the fall out.

Alcohol consumption, coupled with a relaxed social atmosphere, can influence situations and decisions which may not occur in an every-day working environment, ranging from violent and aggressive behaviour to serious claims of bullying and harassment. Employers should remember that they have a legal duty to protect the health and safety of their workforce at all times, something that incorporates parties.

Here are some top tips:

Alcohol

If you are providing a free bar, consider implementing a drink limit and monitor behaviour throughout the night. Excessive alcohol consumption is not an excuse for inappropriate behaviour.

Dietary Requirements

Remember that employees with certain religious beliefs may be vegetarian or unable to eat certain foods. Check beforehand about any special dietary requirements so that these can be accommodated.

Inappropriate Behaviour

Excessive alcohol consumption is not an excuse for someone to make a move. Any signs of inappropriate behaviour should be dealt with immediately. Any employee spotted acting or doing anything that could be considered inappropriate, should be removed from the situation.

Social Media

Even though it's a work night out, employees are still representing your company and posting videos of drunk shenanigans is not good for business and could bring the company into disrepute.

If you don't have a social media policy in place to protect your business then remind your employees ahead of the party to deter any potential bad publicity or poor decisions being made.

Arguments Or Office Gossip

We know all employees don't necessarily get on, and alcohol can sometimes leave people without a filter. This could lead to some arguments or drama amongst the staff. Remind staff that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

The Dress Code

Make sure everyone knows the dress code before the event to save any embarrassment.

Transportation

Consider how your employees will get home after the party. Issue advice in advance about not drinking and driving – an employer may be held responsible for its employee driving home from an office party. Think also about providing transport home, such as laying on coaches to leave at set times during and at the end of the event or ending the event before public transport stops. At the very least encourage employees to think about how they will get home, provide phone numbers for local registered cab companies and suggest employees check the time of their last train home.

Absence from work the next day

Be clear about your expectations regarding absence the next day. If applicable, remind staff that they are expected in work the next day, unless they have booked leave. You may decide to allow employees to come in a little bit later but ensure there is someone in to hold the fort.

Remind employees that any inappropriate behaviour may lead to disciplinary action. Have a fabulous, fun-filled Christmas Party.

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