

## Reducing Risk at Your Holiday Party

Holiday parties offer a wonderful opportunity to connect with friends and celebrate community. Yet the ready availability of alcohol during holiday celebrations can be dangerous, contributing to sharp increases in alcohol-related traffic fatalities during the holiday season. If you choose to serve alcohol at your holiday party, here are some tips for keeping your guests safe.

Stay safe and happy holidays!

- **Always serve food.** Drinking on an empty stomach leads to a more rapid absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream. High-protein foods such as cheese and meat can slow this absorption down.
- **Avoid serving salty snacks.** These tend to make people thirsty and so drink more than they might otherwise
- **Provide appealing non-alcoholic alternatives.** You'll be surprised to see how many guests choose an enticing, alcohol-free "mocktail" when they have the option. Also have plenty of jugs of water and/or bottles of seltzer available.
- **Avoid serving alcoholic punch.** Punch tend to hide the taste of alcohol, leading people to drink in larger quantities. It's also harder for people drinking alcoholic punch to assess how much alcohol they're taking in. If you do offer an alcoholic punch, make sure your guests know that it contains alcohol!
- **Set up separate stations for your alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks.** This not only helps people in recovery avoid potential triggers, but also makes it easier to limit access by minors.
- **Discard half-finished drinks**—another helpful way to reduce youth access!
- **Stop serving alcohol at least an hour before you expect the party to end.** This will allow guests to process the alcohol in their systems before driving home. Baseball stadiums aren't the only places that should stop serving in the 7th inning!
- **Don't rely on caffeine to get your guests sober.** Contrary to popular opinion, caffeine has no effect on how alcohol affects judgement, decision-making, or motor skills. In fact, because it makes people feel more awake, caffeine can mask alcohol impairment.
- **Don't avoid the tough conversations.** If you suspect that one of your guests has had too much to drink, don't be afraid to have a discrete conversation with them about how they plan to get home. Think safety, not judgement. If you're not comfortable with confrontation, find someone who is. Keep in mind that you will be liable if an intoxicated guest is involved in an accident after leaving your party.
- **Arrange transportation for any guests who seem impaired.** In the true holiday spirit, it's more likely than not that a friend or neighbor will have room in the car for one more passenger. In more urban areas, Uber, Lyft, and cabs are also viable options.