

Avoiding the Summertime Blues

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With summer upon us, many employers are once again scheduling summer outings for their employees. Workplaces organize office events at locations such as baseball games, museums, and even breweries. While these outings are orchestrated for beneficial purposes like team building, company culture, and increased connectivity between colleagues, employers should undertake certain precautionary measures to minimize the potential for any inappropriate incidents.

We routinely advise a wide range of clients in the wake of workplace incidents that occur during a company's summer outing. Examples include over-indulgence at the bar, disrespecting boundaries, offensive comments, and, in some cases, claims of harassment. Of course, there is also the ever-present possibility of negative publicity "on the google" when someone shares information on social media about the event.

While there is no sure-fire way to prevent offensive behavior, there are several ways that employers can preemptively mitigate such unfortunate incidents. **Such proactive measures include the following:**

- (1) Send out a reminder of the company's code of conduct the week of the summer outing
- (2) Impose limits on alcohol consumption
- (3) Maintain a firm start and stop time for the event
- (4) Provide expense reimbursement for travel to and from the summer outing
- (5) Address any improper behavior immediately

And, if the summer outing involves physical activity, consider whether a waiver may be necessary. These common-sense approaches will help ensure a safe, enjoyable event for everyone.

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