



Resource Guide for Alcohol Beverage Service – SPECIAL EVENTS PERMITS

The Colorado Liquor Code establishes the mechanism to allow legal sale or service of alcoholic beverages to the public. The laws are written such that any situation that is not specified as permitted is deemed to be not permitted. Citizens can easily see situations where liquor is permitted, such as businesses that hold regular liquor licenses. Other situations are not as clear. This document is intended to be a guide in assisting those who do not regularly hold a liquor license, but may be able to serve alcohol under certain circumstances.

This document is in no way intended to substitute for qualified legal advice. Please consult your attorney.

What: A Special Event Permit authorizes the sale of alcohol beverages by the drink to the public and/or consumption of alcohol in a public place. There are two types of Special Event Permits -- one allows sale of malt, vinous, and spirituous liquor, the other allows only the sale of Fermented Malt Beverages (FMB)(Beer), both by the drink in open containers. The Statutory reference is found in C.R.S. 44-5-101.

Who: Those who qualify for Special Event Permits may or may not currently have a liquor license (i.e. Club or Art Licensees) and must be one of the following:

- Organizations that are nonprofit or charitable and have been incorporated pursuant to Colorado law for purposes of a social, fraternal, patriotic, educational, political, or athletic nature,
- A regularly chartered branch, lodge or chapter of a national organization or society organized for such purposes, which is non-profit,
- An organization which is a regularly established religious or philanthropic institution,
- A political candidate who has filed the necessary reports with the Colorado Secretary of State or local election official,
- Local Government entities, including special districts.

Where: A special event may be conducted on the licensed premises of a Club, Arts, Campus Complex or Limited Winery liquor licensed establishment, or other non-licensed locations.

How: The applicant must submit the following documents to the City Clerk's office at least 45 days prior to the event.

- The appropriate document proving eligibility to conduct an event, usually a Certificate of Good Standing from the CO Secretary of States website will suffice.

- A property rental agreement, lease or letter of possession, which provides that the location may be used for event purposes being held by the applying entity.
- An outlined diagram of the proposed area, specifying dimensions and the method which will be used to control access.
- A completed Special Event application, including both state and local forms (if applicable).
- Appropriate fees.

When: The event must be held on the date, time, and location specified in the application and may not be changed. Fifteen event days are allowed per calendar year and may be held separately or in any combination. If an event is canceled, the application fees and the day(s) are forfeited. Sales may occur between the hours of 5 a.m. and midnight of the day specified for a FMB beer permit; and between the hours of 7 a.m., of the day specified, and 2 a.m. of the following day for malt, vinous and spirituous permits.

The Special Event Permit and an appropriate Minor Warning Sign must be conspicuously displayed during the event. Sandwiches or other food snacks shall be available during the hours of alcohol sale and service.

Events Exempt from Special Events Permit Requirements

There are situations where alcoholic beverages may be served without holding a Special Events Permit. Statutory reference for this exemption is found in C.R.S. 44-5-108. In order to qualify, *all* of the following criteria must be met:

1. The host entity must qualify to hold a Special Events Permit. Criteria are listed in the Special Events Permit section of this document. The host should be prepared to provide documentation to prove eligibility upon request by any law enforcement official.
2. Attendance to the event must be limited to members of the host entity and its guests only. Any host should know, in advance of the event, individual persons who are invited to attend. Most host entities will have regular membership lists. Some hosts, such as a political candidate, may not have such a list. Regardless of the source, invitations to the event must be pre-determined and available in writing if requested by law enforcement officials. The number of guests must be reasonable and may not be unlimited. Please see the Private Party section below for more discussion on qualifications for invited guests.
3. The event must be on private property not accessible by the public. There must not be a liquor license on this property. Areas normally open to the public, such as parks or city facilities, may qualify as private through an appropriate legal document (such as a Special Use Permit) giving the sponsor exclusive use of the area for the duration of the event. Adequate control must be demonstrated to ensure access only to those eligible to attend. Please consider that civil liability may exist even when alcohol is served in a legal manner.
4. Alcohol must be served free of charge. If there is an admission charge to the event, it must be the same for all entrants, whether alcohol is consumed or not.

Private Parties

Private parties are just that.... private. The Liquor Code only specifies how alcoholic beverages may be sold or served to the public. Therefore, there is no statutory reference for a private party.

So just what is a private party? Think of a dinner party in your home. You decide who to invite for a specified event and you provide food and alcohol at no charge. A large event may be a private party, but it still will have the same components as a party in your home.

Consider the following when deciding if your event will be a private party:

- Is the event open to the public? The answer must be no. An event is clearly public if it is advertised in any public venue, such as newspaper, Facebook, radio, television, or flyers/posters in public places. It also qualifies as public if a person not on the original guest list can acquire an invitation through purchase of a membership, ticket, or any other item that gains them admission to the event.
- Your guest list must contain names of specific individuals and be limited in number. While this number may be large, you as a host are still required to know the names on the list, and to ensure that only those invited attend the event.
- If a person who is not on the invited guest list contacts you and asks to be invited and you agree, then the event has just become open to the public.
- Your invitations may be directed to a particular individual only, an individual plus a guest, or an individual plus specified guests. An example would be a company holiday party, where employees and their families are invited. You as a host have an expectation of how many guests an employee may bring.
- You may not charge for alcohol in any way. This includes accepting donations or charging for admission.
- The host cannot provide glassware, mixers, or a location for a recurring event.

Catered Events

Liquor licenses are only operational at the location of the permanent business. A caterer holding a liquor license, cannot sell or serve alcohol in any way, outside their regularly licensed location. As host, you may have other options by way of a Special Events Permit being a non-profit organization or private party.

For more Information...

As always, your attorney is a good source of guidance to ensure that your event is in compliance with the law. For information regarding the liquor license process, please contact the Wheat Ridge City Clerk's office:

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