

# Respecting Sober Employees: 3 Tips to Host a Healthy Office Holiday Party

## For Managers and HR Leaders



It's that wonderful time of the year when our staff gathers together to celebrate the holidays and look back on all we've accomplished as a team this year. As the office festivities ramp up, it's common for some employees to engage in excessive behaviours, such as spending, eating, and yes, drinking. For others, the holidays can be a challenging time of year if they're trying to stay sober - especially if they're early in their recovery. So, to show respect for your employees who have chosen to remain sober, due to an addiction or simply choosing a healthy lifestyle, it's best practice to be mindful that office holiday parties can be a source of unnecessary temptation.

Follow these three tips to help your employees enjoy the holidays without sacrificing the time and dedication they've invested in their sobriety:



- 1. Plan an Alcohol-Free Party:** Even though certain employees might assume that alcohol will be available at their holiday office party, it doesn't need to be an expectation. As a manager or HR leader, you can set a healthy tone for work celebrations by opting to offer only non-alcoholic refreshments. Not only will that alleviate any reservations your sober employees might have about attending, but it will also prevent any intoxicated behaviour from affecting the dynamic of your staff, and as a result, ruining what could've been an enjoyable holiday party.

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**2. Offer Non-Alcoholic Substitutions:** If you are going to provide alcoholic drinks at your office holiday party, buy non-alcoholic alternatives so that your sober employees can join in on the festivities without feeling the social pressure to drink. Consider offering plain egg nog, sparkling apple juice, soda, water, coffee/tea, non-alcoholic beer, or mocktails – as a bonus, these drinks are cheaper and will use less of your company’s budget. You might even find out that more employees prefer a healthier beverage.

**3. Be an Advocate for Sobriety:** Help your sober employees feel comfortable with their decision to be sober by recognizing sobriety as a point of pride, not shame. In recent years, society has begun to see the value in living a sober life and praises people for prioritizing their mental, emotional, and physical health. Incorporate this perspective into your organizational culture to improve the well-being of your entire staff. Once you start emphasizing the benefits of your employees living a healthy lifestyle, you might just see that morale increases while turnover and sick or stress leave time decreases. After all, healthy employees are productive employees.

By accommodating your sober employees with a safe, comfortable, and respectful work environment, you’re showing that you genuinely care about their mental and physical health. If you notice that one of your employees is struggling to stay sober this holiday season, remember to suggest that they can always seek professional support from a qualified counsellor through their employee assistance program. It’s helpful to remind them that even though they have the power to stay sober, they don’t have to do it alone.

From all of us at Homewood Health, we wish you the happiest of holidays and the very best in 2025!

