

## TEAM Helps Leagues, Teams and Facilities Avert Alcohol-Related Liability

*(Editor's Note: A regular feature of Legal Insights will be a conversation with a person involved in an area in which we practice. This issue features a conversation with Jill Pepper, the Executive Director of TEAM Coalition, Inc., an alliance of professional and collegiate sports, entertainment facilities, concessionaires, stadium service providers, the beer industry, broadcasters, governmental traffic safety experts, and others working together to promote responsible drinking and positive fan behavior at sports and entertainment facilities.)*

### Q. (HRRV) What is TEAM's mission?

#### A. (Jill Pepper)

TEAM (Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management) Coalition's mission is to provide effective alcohol service training in public assembly facilities and promote responsible alcohol consumption that enhances the entertainment experience while reducing alcohol-related instances both in facilities and on surrounding roadways.

### Q. What benefits can an entity realize by becoming a part of TEAM?

A. TEAM offers its member organizations, which include professional and collegiate sports, entertainment facilities, concessionaires, stadium service providers, the beer industry, broadcasters, and governmental traffic safety experts, the following benefits:

- Reducing alcohol-related incidents in stadiums and crashes on roadways
- Promoting family atmosphere, fan enjoyment, and safety
- Helping to prevent underage access to alcohol
- Helping to ensure compliance with alcohol laws
- Alerting stadium staff to liability issues
- Reducing insurance claims and liability suits

### Q. How does TEAM interact with the different venues, leagues, managers and vendors?

A. TEAM does not offer its members a "one-size-fits-all" approach to effective alcohol management. Each venue, league, team, and concessionaire utilizes what TEAM has to offer in a way that best fits the needs and goals of that organization.



TEAM has three primary offerings that the member organizations utilize:

- TEAM's primary function is to provide a training program for facility employees, designed to incorporate every job function in the building from beer sellers, to usher, security, and maintenance workers. The training program includes certification that is recognized by states with regulations regarding server training. However, all participants in the training program receive certification, which means that the TEAM program offers members a reasonable effort that goes beyond compliance with state laws.
- TEAM does not weigh in on what alcohol policies are the best for sports venues, as each has its own challenges when it comes to fan safety and security. TEAM prioritizes alcohol policy communication and enforcement. TEAM tracks the policies across all leagues, and TEAM helps facilities communicate those policies to fans. An integral part of the TEAM training program is to ensure facility managers are prepared to educate their staff as to what should be done when policies are violated. That is the key.
- Fan education regarding their responsibility when it comes to alcohol consumption is the third component of TEAM's platform. The Responsibility Has Its Rewards campaign encourages fans of all sports to never drive drunk, always have a designated driver, never provide alcohol to anyone under 21, and always buckle up. The campaign includes sweepstakes, Public Service Announcements, and event marketing.

### Q. What training and educational services does TEAM provide to coalition members?

A. TEAM training in effective alcohol management is an employee-focused, full-facility alcohol management program

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available to sport and entertainment facility professionals. It has combined the wisdom of industry operations professionals from professional and collegiate sports, concessionaires, stadium operators, and stadium service partners. TEAM training represents the most comprehensive thinking about alcohol management, preparing facility operations managers to train alcohol servers and event-day employees to manage the sale, service and consumption of alcohol at public gatherings. Each year, over 25,000 employees of nearly 100 sports and entertainment facilities become certified in the TEAM program.

Key components of TEAM training include:

- Recognizing signs of impairment
- Understanding how the misuse of alcohol affects employees, guests, the facility and the community

Managing alcohol effectively by working together as a team

- Demonstrating reasonable efforts to minimize liability when it comes to alcohol-related incidents
- Helping to prevent underage access to alcohol by checking IDs and looking for pass-offs
- Helping to ensure compliance with state alcohol service laws

**Q. What are your thoughts regarding tailgating? What steps can be taken to eliminate or to minimize the risk of alcohol-related incidents at facilities where tailgating is permitted?**

**A.** Tailgating is definitely a challenge for facility managers. For many fans, it is as much a part of the game day experience as singing the National Anthem or standing up to cheer when your favorite team scores. In order to ensure fans are

acting safely and responsibly, facility managers need to enforce pre-game alcohol policies as stringently as they do for alcohol service policies during the game. Limiting the hours fans can tailgate and what they can bring in to the parking lot are important steps. Monitoring the tailgating areas to ensure fans are following the policies is necessary. Security staff, uniformed-officers, and facility managers should be very visible in the tailgating areas. And those areas should have signs posted with the policies and consequence of violating those policies easily visible.

A critical component toward minimizing alcohol-related incidents in facilities where tailgating is permitted is to train the ticket takers at all the gates in the TEAM program. If ticket takers witness a fan showing the warning signs of impairment and they take action before the fan even enters the facility, then alcohol-related incidents can be avoided.

**Q. Do smaller venues have different alcohol-related risks than larger venues? Is the size of or type of venue significant from TEAM's perspective?**

**A.** From TEAM's perspective, the size of the venue matters less than the venue's preparedness when it comes to alcohol management. A 13,000-seat arena hosting a heavy metal rock festival with a total of 400 employees may have as many alcohol-related incidents on a per-fan or per-employee basis as an 80,000-seat stadium with 3,000 employees hosting a playoff-determining game between two long-time rivals. In either case, facility managers need to have a plan to handle fans who appear to have had too much to drink and violate the fan code of conduct. The goal is to keep everyone safe. And that is where TEAM is here to help.

## SCHEDULED PRESENTATIONS

- ▶ **Potential Litigation Arising Out of Lead Paint Toy Recalls**  
Tara Fappiano  
Andrews Publications  
October 25, 2007  
Webinar
- ▶ **Finding the "Green" In Green Construction**  
Sean Dwyer  
27th Annual International  
Risk Management Institute  
Construction Risk Conference  
October 29–November 1, 2007  
Orlando, FL
- ▶ **How to Take and Defend Effective Depositions**  
Jonathan A. Judd  
Litigation Institute of New York  
November 2, 2007  
New York, NY
- ▶ **Venue and Premises Liability**  
Carla Varriale & Steve Rosenfeld  
2007 International Conference  
on Sport and Entertainment  
Business  
November 15–17, 2007  
Columbia, South Carolina
- ▶ **Evidence: Strategies for Finding, Preserving and Using Evidence to Support Your Case**  
Sean Dwyer  
November 29, 2007  
Long Island, NY
- ▶ **Avoiding Liability as an Owner/Operator of a Sports or Recreation Facility**  
Carla Varriale  
Athletic Business Conference & Expo  
November 29, 2007  
Orlando, FL
- ▶ **International Sports Law**  
Carla Varriale  
December 5, 2007  
London, England
- ▶ **Venue and Premises Liability**  
Carla Varriale & Steve Rosenfeld  
2008 Stadium Managers Association  
(SMA) Seminar  
February 3–7, 2008  
San Diego, CA