



“Bring-Your-Own” Alcohol at Outdoor Public Events

Health, Safety, and Risk Mitigation Considerations

On March 17, 2026, the Ontario Government [announced](#) municipalities may permit “Bring-Your-Own” (BYO) alcoholic beverages at qualifying outdoor public events, subject to the passage of a municipal bylaw for municipally designated cultural or community events. (1) Southwestern Public Health is providing a public health perspective to support municipal decision-makers by outlining key health, safety and equity considerations, along with evidence-informed strategies to reduce alcohol related harms to communities. Evidence consistently demonstrates that increased availability and access to alcohol normalizes use among young people and contributes to elevated levels of drinking and related harm, ultimately impacting community safety and wellbeing. (2,3,4,5)

This document outlines health, safety, and equity considerations:

- Before allowing the BYO permit process in your municipality
- When developing criteria for BYO permits
- When administering and implementing BYO permits

Please note that the guidance provided in this document is not intended to be a substitute for professional legal or liability advice.

Considerations Before Allowing the BYO Permit Process in Your Municipality

Ensure strong governance, safety controls, and enforcement requirements are in place by considering the following: (6)

- Carefully assess local readiness, including consulting with local alcohol/drug strategies, emergency services, enforcement and community safety and well-being partnerships. (6)
- Review and align existing internal processes, event-permit frameworks, and Municipal Alcohol Policies (MAPs). (6)
- Ensure that there is existing staffing and enforcement capacity to meet the needs of this type of event. (6)
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan using multiple data sources and ongoing public input. (4)

- Clarify the requirements and responsibilities of permit holders within the new/revised bylaws (e.g., Smart Serve trained persons onsite at all times). (6,7)
- Review the [AGCO Guidelines](#). (7)

Considerations for Developing Criteria for BYO Permits

<p>Define community and cultural events for BYO permits intentionally.</p>	<p>Municipal definitions should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure definitions align with community safety and well-being goals. • Exclude family-focused events where children and youth may be present, and at locations primarily frequented by children (e.g. playgrounds, sports fields, splash pads, libraries, and schools). (4,6,8) • Include only locations with demonstrated safety and suitability for alcohol consumption (see below).
<p>Set criteria for BYO permits that meet municipal requirements to support health, safety, and well-being.</p>	<p>BYO permits should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, rather than through blanket approvals and should avoid creating cultural or safety barriers for non-drinkers. (6)</p> <p>Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict locations such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child-related environments: playgrounds, wading pools, splash pads, or skateboard and BMX parks, etc. (4,6,8) ○ Inherently unsafe environments: outdoor pools, natural or outdoor ice rinks, other bodies of water, etc. (4,8) ○ In conjunction with higher-risk activities. (4) • Exclude events where alcohol use would reasonably increase nuisance, risk, or inequity. (4,6,9) • Restrict hours for when the event can take place. (3,4,9) • Require locations to have access to drinking water, washrooms, garbage, recycling, and public transportation, if available. (4,8)

Considerations for Administering and Implementing BYO Permits

<p>Apply a risk reduction approach.</p>	<p>Consider incorporating the following risk reduction strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict where alcohol can be consumed within the permit. Designate separate areas for alcohol consumption and maintain substantial alcohol-free areas with physical barriers and signage. Ensure equal enjoyment of the event by all members, drinking and non-drinking. (6,7) • Only allow 19+ years in designated drinking areas. (7) • Prohibit glass alcohol bottles to prevent injury from broken containers. (4,7) • Require food and non-alcoholic beverages to be available. (2,10,11) • Require personal consumption limits consistent with Ontario regulations intended to prevent intoxication and over-service at events. (2,6,10,11,12,13) • Enforce a zero-tolerance standard for disorderly conduct, public intoxication and underage drinking. (6,11) • Establish an emergency response plan, including procedures for intoxication, injury and crowd management.
<p>Conduct comprehensive monitoring and evaluation.</p>	<p>Monitor and evaluate community harms and costs (e.g., public safety/security, liability, trash collection, signage, and employee time). (4)</p> <p>Consider post-event reports and compliance reviews to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address complaints and incidents. (6) • Assess enforcement effectiveness. (6) • Inform future event approvals and policy adjustments. (6)
<p>Signage and public education.</p>	<p>At a minimum, a Sandy's Law poster should be posted at the event. (14)</p> <p>Consider the following as well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public education measures that inform the public when permits are required for events involving BYO alcohol.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signage on not driving impaired with local taxi or public transit information.• Canadian Centre for Substance use and Addiction’s Poster. |
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References

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