

Alcohol Management & Licensing

DISCLAIMER: This section is intended for informational purposes only. California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) policies and processes are subject to change. Please contact a state ABC representative for official guidelines and complete information.

In the State of California, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to consume or possess alcoholic beverages. As the Event Sponsor, you and your organization are legally liable for any consumption or possession of alcohol by a person under the age of 21 at your event. In order to obtain approval to serve alcohol at your event, you will be required to first work with the Permit Officer at the [Local Police District Station](#) (with jurisdiction over the event location) on developing a security plan. This security plan should include plans to prevent underage drinking, over-serving patrons, drunk driving, as well as addressing intoxicated behavior and protecting the health and safety of the public. A security plan may include separating persons under the age of 21 from persons of legal drinking age.

If the Local Police District Station approves your security plan and ABC Liquor License application, you must submit the application to the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) in order to receive final approval.

Additional security and medical staff may be required for events with alcohol based on increased risk factors. See Security Plan and Emergency Medical Plan Sections for more information.

APPLYING FOR AN ABC LICENSE:

Submit the [State of California ABC Liquor License application](#) and your Security Plan:

- ❖ **FIRST:** To Local Police District Station's permit officer for initial decision
- ❖ **SECOND:** If approved by the Local Police District, then submit the ABC application to the [CA Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control \(ABC\), San Francisco Office](#). The original signed application is due to the local ABC office between 30 and 10 days prior to the event.

Issuance of the license may be subject to conditions relating to the sales, service, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. If conditions are imposed, a representative of the organization may be required to come into the State of California ABC office to sign them.

COMMON TYPES OF ABC LIQUOR LICENSES FOR SPECIAL EVENTS:

Daily Special Liquor License (ABC Form 221)

Used by an existing non-profit:

- » Special Daily Beer
- » Special Daily Wine
- » Special Daily Beer & Wine

Daily General License (ABC Form 221)

Used by an organization formed for a specific charitable or civic purpose, a fraternal organization in existence for over five years, a religious organization, or a political organization

- » Authorizes Serving: Beer, Wine and Distilled Spirits
- » Limited to no more than 2 consecutive days per event. 501(c)6 organizations can only be approved to serve beer and wine.

Catering Authorization (ABC Form 218)

Used by an existing liquor licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) that also holds a state Caterer's Permit.

Event Authorization (ABC Form 215)

Used by an existing liquor licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) holding an event on adjacent property

- » Limited to Four (4) total days per calendar year

CONDITIONS FOR DAILY LIQUOR LICENSES:

- » If a license is to be issued to an area or place which is not clearly defined, such as a park area, fairgrounds or street, it will be issued only when the applicant agrees in writing to confine his sales, services and consumption of the alcoholic beverages to a specific, definable area under his supervision and control. The licensee shall be responsible for any violation of the California Alcoholic Beverage Control Act occurring therein.
- » Supervision of alcohol sales should at all times be under the control of your organization. No other person should have any authority to sell alcoholic beverages.
- » Only that alcoholic beverage specified on your license is permitted on the premises during the time when your license is operative. A beer license permits only beer; a wine license, only wine.
- » You may not sell, furnish or give alcoholic beverages to any person under the age of 21. Refuse to sell to anyone who is obviously a minor regardless of identification and require bona fide identification from any person who appears 30 years of age or younger. Bona fide forms of identification are those that are currently valid, reflecting date of birth, physical description and photograph. Identification must be issued by a federal, state or municipal government.
- » You may not sell, furnish or give alcoholic beverages to persons who are obviously intoxicated.

- » You may sell on the day specified at any time between 6:00 am and 2:00 am of the following day, unless your license restricts the hours during which alcoholic beverages may be sold. No sales may be made between the hours of 2:00 am and 6:00 am on any day.

FOR DAILY GENERAL LICENSES ONLY:

Beer and wine may be purchased at either retail or wholesale outlets. Distilled spirits can only be purchased at retail stores. Upon display of your license to the supplier you may purchase beer and wine from a warehouse platform on any day.

FOR DAILY SPECIAL LICENSES ONLY:

Beverage suppliers may deliver to your licensed premises between the hours of 6 a.m. and 8 p.m. on any day Monday through Saturday, but NOT on Sunday. Upon display of your license to the supplier you may purchase from a warehouse platform on any day.

FOR DAILY SPECIAL LICENSES ONLY:

- » Under this license, you may not purchase alcoholic beverages from a retailer for resale.
- » A supplier may lend, sell or rent to you draft pumps, ice boxes, and other tapping accessories.
- » Unsold and unopened alcoholic beverages may be returned to the supplier.
- » Limit the sale or service of alcoholic beverages to one drink per person at any one time.
- » Drinks should be served in containers no larger than 16 ounces.
- » Sellers and servers should be trained in I.D. checking and recognizing signs of intoxication.
- » If public attendance is permitted, you should provide adequate security to monitor your event.
- » Do not allow the consumption of alcoholic beverages in parking lots.
- » Alternative non-alcoholic beverages should be available.
- » Have food available.
- » Do not allow anyone to bring their own alcoholic beverages to your event.
- » In addition, the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control strongly encourages every organization who obtains a daily license, to provide training for their personnel in serving alcoholic beverages responsibly. By serving responsibly, your organization can have a direct impact on preventing the problems of sales to minors, public drunkenness,

and impaired driving which threatens the health and safety of all Californians.

For application and conditions for **Catering Authorization**, [click here](#). A Catering Authorization License is used by an existing liquor licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) that also holds a state Caterer's Liquor Permit.

For application and conditions for **Event Authorization**, [click here](#). An Event Authorization is used by an existing liquor licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) holding an event on adjacent property. This license authorizes up to 4 events per year.

WHICH ABC LIQUOR LICENSE IS APPROPRIATE FOR MY SPECIAL EVENT?

Refer to the charts below to see which type of licenses are appropriate for your organization and important things to know. Also, continue reading the frequently asked questions below to learn more.

❖ THIS SECTION FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

I'm a Non-Profit Organization. How can my organization make money from selling liquor at my special event?

If a 501(c)3 non-profit organization obtains a Daily General, Special Daily Beer, Special Daily Wine, or a Special Daily Beer & Wine License from ABC, that organization has the authority to sell liquor for consumption on the premises. In other words, the organization may keep the proceeds from these sales. The organization must submit ABC Form 221.

If a 501(c)6 or 501(c)9 non-profit organization obtains a Special Daily Beer, Special Daily Wine, or a Special Daily Beer & Wine License, that organization has the authority to sell beer and/or wine for consumption on the premises. They may keep the proceeds from these sales.

I'm a Non-Profit Organization and I want to sell distilled spirits (vodka, whiskey, tequila, etc.) at my special event. What license is appropriate?

An ABC Daily General License allows the license-holder to sell distilled spirits, beer, and wine for consumption on the premises. The following types of organizations are eligible to obtain an ABC Daily General License: a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, a fraternal organization in existence over five years, a religious organization, or a political organization.

Note: these organizations are only examples of some of the kinds of organizations that can qualify for the special license provided they obtain 501 tax exempt status. It's not either/or. The organization must submit ABC Form 221.

I'm a Non-Profit Organization. Do I need to provide my own staff to serve/sell liquor at my special event? Am I allowed to hire someone to take care of that?

A non-profit organization that obtains an ABC special event liquor license has the option to serve liquor on their own, or they may hire any person age 18 years or older to serve alcohol that is provided by a person / bartender who is age 21 or over. If the organization chooses to hire someone to

provide labor, a best practice is to hire either a holder of a Caterer's Liquor License (Type 58), or staff that is trained in L.E.A.D. – i.e., trained in checking I.D.'s, recognizing signs of intoxication, and more. Learn more about L.E.A.D. Training [by clicking here](#). Each person/bartender who mixes alcoholic beverages must be age 21 or over. At an all-ages event, either licensed with a Special Daily License or with an Event Authorization (except caterers who are issued under Type 48 or 42 licenses which are restricted to age 21 and over), any person age 18 years or older is allowed to serve alcohol that is provided by a person/bartender who is age 21 or over. The non-profit organization is still responsible to ensure that the liquor is served legally and safely for consumption on the premises. Whoever is hired to provide the labor, that person or business is not allowed to purchase the liquor and no Catering Authorization is required.

I'm not selling alcohol – I'm just providing alcohol and collecting donations. Do I need an ABC special event liquor license?

If your event's premises is open to the general public during the time alcoholic beverages are served, consumed, or disposed of, then the answer is YES.

Section 23025 of the California ABC code defines "sell," "sale" and "to sell" as "any transaction whereby, for any consideration, title to alcoholic beverages is transferred from one person to another, and includes the delivery of alcoholic beverages pursuant to an order placed for the purchase of such beverages and soliciting or receiving an order for such beverages, but does not include the return of alcoholic beverages by a licensee to the licensee from whom such beverages were purchased."

❖ THIS SECTION FOR FOR-PROFIT COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS

I'm a For-Profit Company or an Individual. How can I make money from selling liquor at my special event?

It is common for a for-profit company or an individual to make a business deal with a hired company that already holds an ABC Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58). For example, a business deal may involve profit sharing or the hired company charging a flat fee for services. That hired company – not the producer/promoter – is then responsible for obtaining the ABC Catering Authorization for the special event and procuring the alcohol. The hired company must submit ABC Form 218.

Note: A Type 58 caterer cannot hire itself for its own event; the Type 58 caterer must always have a client in order to serve or sell alcohol.

Important: Not all holders of a Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58) are authorized to sell distilled spirits (vodka, whiskey, tequila, etc.). Some are restricted to selling beer and/or wine only. Early in your planning stages, confirm what types of alcohol the Type 58 permit holder is authorized to sell.

Important for All-Ages Events, including Street Fairs: Only companies that already hold an ABC Type 41 or Type 47 License may serve/sell alcohol at all-ages events. These companies are restaurants that sell both food and alcohol and where all ages are allowed.

For 21-and-over events: The producer can hire any holder of a Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58) and has the authority to restrict their event to be 21-and-over.

Companies that already hold a Type 42 or Type 48 License (along with a Caterer's Liquor Permit) are restricted to catering events that are 21-and-over. Companies that already hold a Type 41 or Type 47 License (along with a Caterer's Liquor Permit) can cater events that are all-ages or 21-and-over. In the early planning stages, confirm with the business whether it is restricted to sell at 21-and-over events.

I'm a For-Profit Company or an Individual, and I want to sell distilled spirits (vodka, whiskey, tequila, etc.) at my special event. What license is appropriate?

As the section directly above says, a for-profit company or an individual is allowed to hire a company that already holds an ABC Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58). However, not all holders of a Type 58 Permit are authorized to sell distilled spirits – some are restricted to selling only beer and/or wine. Confirm with the Type 58 permit holder what types of alcohol they are authorized to sell.

Once selected, the hired company is then responsible for obtaining the ABC Catering Authorization license for the special event. The hired company must submit ABC Form 218.

I'm a For-Profit Company or an Individual. Can I partner with a Non-Profit Organization that obtains an ABC Special Event Liquor License and then share the liquor sales with that organization?

No. Only the non-profit organization shall be the recipient of all proceeds generated from the sale of alcohol at the event.

❖ THIS SECTION FOR ALL TYPES OF BUSINESSES

Who is allowed to purchase the liquor? And who can they buy it from?

For Daily General, Special Daily Beer, Special Daily Wine, or a Special Daily Beer & Wine License, the non-profit organization (license holder) may purchase liquor from any ABC licensed retailer (e.g. grocery store, Costco). For a Catering Authorization, the existing holder of a Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58) is required to purchase the liquor from an ABC licensed wholesaler.

My event is open to the public. Isn't the term "catering" or "caterer" only for a private event?

No, a Catering Authorization license and a Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58) can be used for selling liquor at an event that is either private or open to the public.

I have a bar or restaurant in mind to sell liquor at my special event. Can they be the ones to sell liquor at the event?

Yes, but only if the bar or restaurant already holds a Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58).

Important: Confirm with your desired bar or restaurant early in the planning process to learn if they already hold a Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58) and what their restrictions and privileges are. If your desired bar/restaurant does not already hold a Type 58 permit, then that bar/restaurant would need to apply for a Type 58 permit from the ABC. If you are able to confirm this with the bar or restaurant, then the next step is for the bar/restaurant to obtain a Catering Authorization from ABC in order to sell liquor at the special event. The bar/restaurant must submit ABC Form 218.

What does ABC mean by "dispensing location"?

A dispensing location refers to each area where liquor is served –AND– is:
(1) is under the control of a bartender or a station of bartenders.

(2) is physically separated so it's not visible to another dispensing location, or is across a pedestrian aisle from another dispensing location.

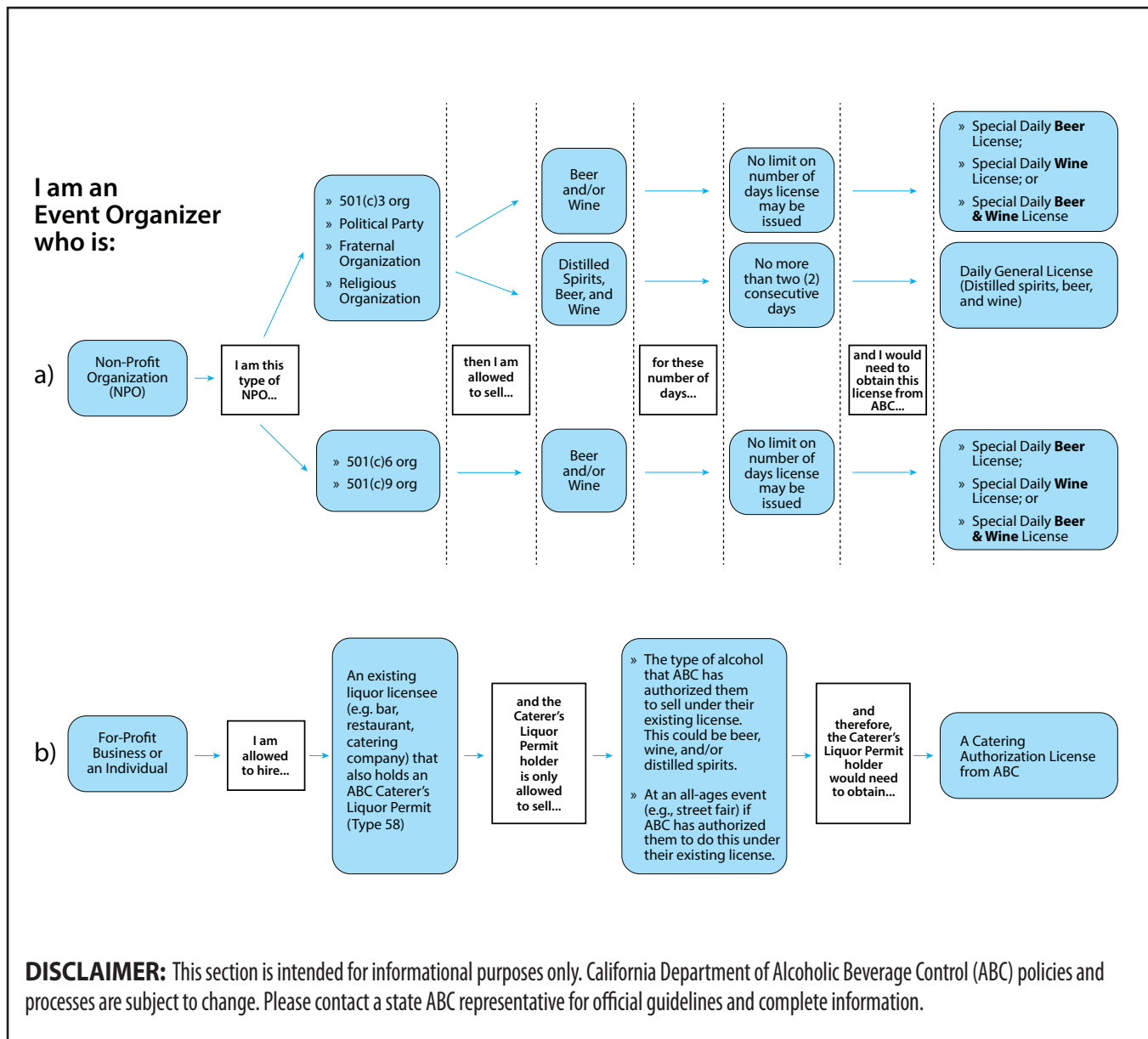
Each dispensing location must be indicated on a detailed map and event layout/diagram and submitted with the ABC application. ABC has final determination of what is a separate dispensing location.

What does ABC mean by "the premises"?

The premises is the specific, definable area that the license holder confines their sales, services and consumption of the alcoholic beverages. This area must be under their supervision and control. If this area is in a park, fairgrounds or street, then the license applicant must clearly indicate in writing the exact location and boundaries of this area. A detailed map and event layout/diagram must be provided with the ABC application.

❖ ORGANIZING AN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE 'WALK', INCLUDING A 'WINE WALK'

[Refer to this FAQ Sheet](#) for guidelines and information.



Common Types of ABC Special Event Liquor Licenses

These licenses authorize the temporary sales of liquor for consumption on the premises at a special event.

LICENSE TYPE	WHAT IT ALLOWS	WHO MAY APPLY	IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW	FEES
Special Daily Beer (ABC Form 221)	Selling/serving beer for consumption on the premise	501(c)3, 501(c)6, and 501(c)9 non-profit organizations	Applicant must obtain pre-approval from Local Police District Station. No limit on number of days the license may be issued. For application and instructions, click here .	\$25 per day per dispensing point
Special Daily Wine (ABC Form 221)	Selling/serving wine for consumption on the premise	501(c)3, 501(c)6, and 501(c)9 non-profit organizations	Applicant must obtain pre-approval from Local Police District Station. No limit on number of days the license may be issued. For application and instructions, click here .	\$25 per day per dispensing point
Special Daily Beer & Wine (ABC Form 221)	Selling/serving beer and wine for consumption on the premise	501(c)3, 501(c)6, and 501(c)9 non-profit organizations	Applicant must obtain pre-approval from Local Police District Station. No limit on number of days the license may be issued. For application and instructions, click here .	\$50 per day per dispensing point
Daily General (ABC Form 221)	Selling/serving distilled spirits, beer and wine for consumption on the premise	501(c)3 non-profit organizations & political parties, fraternal organizations, religious organizations (some exceptions).	License can be issued for no more than two (2) consecutive days. Applicant must obtain pre-approval from Local Police District Station. For application and instructions, click here .	\$25 per day per dispensing point
Catering Authorization (ABC Form 218)	Allows an existing liquor licensee that holds an ABC Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58) to sell/serve beer, wine and distilled spirits for consumption on the premises. The type of liquor depends on what their existing liquor license allows them to serve.	An existing liquor licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) that also holds an ABC Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58). In some cases, a bar or restaurant might also hold an ABC Caterer's Liquor Permit (Type 58).	Alcohol must be purchased by the Type 58 permit holder from an ABC-licensed wholesaler. Certain events require local law enforcement approval & signature (if large number of attendees, open to the public, etc.) For application and instructions, click here .	\$25 per day per dispensing point
Event Authorization (ABC Form 215)	Allows an existing on-sale licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption on adjacent property.	Allows an existing on-sale licensee (e.g., bar, restaurant) holding an ABC Type 41, 42, 47, 48, 49, 57, 71, 72, 78 or 87 license to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption on adjacent property. The type of liquor depends on what their existing liquor license allows them to serve.	Limited to four (4) total days per calendar year. The property must be secured and controlled by the licensee and not visible to the general public. For application and instructions, click here .	\$142 annual

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