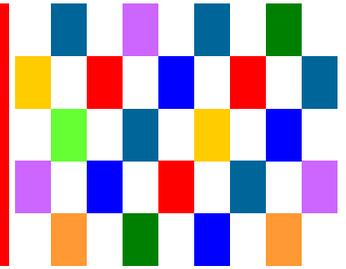


Alcohol Prevention Enhancement Site

Bluegrass Prevention Center —Lexington, KY
859-225-3296



WHAT IS A SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE?

Social Host Ordinances “give law enforcement a tool to control private parties where underage drinking occurs, and they serve as a significant deterrent to hosting the parties in the first place.”

According to the 2006 KIP Survey taken by Kentucky students:

40% of 8th graders
And 78% of
12th graders
say that:
alcohol is easy to get

When asked
“Where Do You Drink Alcohol?”

3% of high school
students answered
“Bars”

25% said
“At Home”

42% said
“At a Friend’s House”

The Problem

Alcohol is the drug of choice for youth. It is involved in the deaths of more teenagers than all other illicit drugs combined, by a four-to-one ratio. While many believe that underage drinking is a “rite of passage” from which resilient teenage bodies easily recover, *the opposite is true*. The brain changes dramatically during adolescence, and this growth can be seriously inhibited by alcohol. Because of the negative consequences of underage drinking, youth access must be addressed through all sources, including social sources. Adults may allow teenagers to drink at their home because they feel that they are creating a safer environment for the drinking to occur. **Even if youth don’t drive after drinking at a party, the long-term risks of underage drinking are unacceptable.**

At local and national levels, home parties have repeatedly been identified as the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol. Communities across Kentucky are beginning to respond to the problem of adults facilitating underage drinking by addressing the environment of the community.

Looking Toward Change

Local communities can pass a Social Host Ordinance to hold adults responsible for underage drinking occurring in their home or on their property.

Current liability laws hold establishments responsible only if a third party is injured or killed as a result of serving an intoxicated patron in a commercial setting. **Social host laws** hold adult hosts accountable by allowing police to issue misdemeanor citations with fines attached to any adult who permits underage drinking in their home or on their property.

The officer does not need to witness the adult handing alcohol to a minor to issue a citation. The law can extend to include adults who don’t take sufficient measures to prevent underage drinking from occurring in their home or on their property—even if they are not home when the drinking occurs. Social host ordinances give law enforcement a tool to control private parties where underage drinking occurs, and they serve as a significant deterrent to hosting the parties in the first place.

As of early 2007, six Kentucky communities have passed Social Host ordinances, and many more communities are in the process.

(Information taken from “Issue Briefing: Institute for Public Strategies. “Adult Accountability for Underage Drinking: The Case for Social Host Laws”)

Frequently Asked Questions

A Social Host Ordinance would hold adults (social hosts) criminally responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease or otherwise control.

Isn't it already illegal for kids to drink alcohol?

It is illegal for minors, under 21, to possess, purchase, attempt to purchase or use alcoholic beverages (KRS 241.010, KRS.244, 085)

So, existing state laws cover this. Right?

Partially. Currently, due to a loophole, there is no law that addresses these situations involving minors between the ages of 18–20. If an adult hosts a party for minors between the ages of 18–20, that adult cannot currently be held accountable. Laws regarding Endangering the Welfare of a Minor (KRS.060) and Unlawful Transaction with a Minor (KRS.070) only address transactions with minors under the age of 18. *A Social Host Ordinance addresses the loophole.*

What if a person between the ages of 18–20 hosted a party where underage drinking happened?

A Social Host Ordinance would state that anyone under the age of 21, acting as a social host, with no parents or guardians present, shall be guilty and subjected to the penalties described in the social host ordinance.

I have land in this county but I don't live there. Am I still accountable for what takes place on my land such as "field parties"?

This will depend on how the Social Host ordinance is written. Some ordinances state that if you have seen remnants of a party (for example, empty beer cans and bottles), you are required to notify law enforcement. If you do so, then you are protected. However, if you continue to see remnants of a party and fail to notify law enforcement, neglect to post signs and / or fail to take measures to keep people off your land when you are away, you may be held liable.

What if I just 'don't know' what my kid is doing with his/her friends at my house?

A Social Host Ordinance would state that "no adult who owns or controls a private residence or private premise should allow a party to take place or continue if a minor (under the age of 21) at the party obtains, possesses, or consumes any alcoholic beverages and the adult knows or reasonably should know that the minor (under the age of 21) has obtained, possesses or is consuming alcoholic beverages. If a parent/adult owns the property, the parent/adult should know what is taking place.

Isn't it safer to have minors drink at home?

Many parents want to be "cool" and truly believe it is better and safer for their teenager and friends to drink at home as long as they take the keys away; however, for many reasons, they are wrong. Frequently the parents of the other minors are unaware that drinking occurs in what was perceived to be a supervised environment. It is always illegal for those under 21 to possess and consume alcohol and there are numerous other hazards besides drinking and driving. There are risks involved with violence, brain development, high risk sex, other drug use, alcohol poisoning, homicide, suicide and infinite other possible injuries. **All parents and concerned adults need to send a consistent message that underage alcohol use is illegal and dangerous. Underage drinking is not a rite of passage into adulthood.**

(Information adapted from Region 6 Local ASAP Board)

Information on the Web:

www.greatkentuckyparents.org (Click on Oldham County)

www.publicstrategies.org/east/goals_social_host.htm

www.icoe.org/ISC/Underage+Drinking.htm

Please contact the Alcohol Prevention Enhancement Site for more information:

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