

# Contra Costa Social Host Ordinance Fact Sheet

## Preventing Underage Drinking Parties

Social host ordinances prevent underage drinking parties by holding the host (e.g., parents or other adults) accountable for these parties. A social host ordinance sends the clear message to parents and other adults that it is not acceptable to give alcohol to teens.



## Why Have a Social Host Ordinance?

According to the 2007 California Healthy Kids Survey, 41% of Contra Costa County 11th graders report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days. This surpasses the state average of 37%. 79% of 11th graders also say that it is “very easy” or “fairly easy” to obtain alcohol.

Most youth get alcohol through social means – parties, older siblings, parents and/or other adults. Approximately 65% of youth surveyed said that they got the alcohol they drink from family and friends. (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency)

A Social Host Ordinance:

- ✓ Empowers parents, neighbors, and other concerned citizens to seek help from law enforcement when there are youth suspected of underage drinking, unruly or loud parties, or other potentially dangerous or illegal situations involving minors;
- ✓ Provides law enforcement with a formal course of action to combat underage drinking;
- ✓ Recoups some of the expense of providing police and/or other public services in responses to these gatherings.

## The Ordinance

<b>Where It Applies</b>	The ordinance applies to ALL unincorporated areas of Contra Costa. Some cities also have their own ordinances
<b>Type of Citation</b>	Law enforcement may issue a misdemeanor citation
<b>Potential Fine</b>	A citation could result in a \$1,000 fine
<b>Potential Jail Time</b>	A citation could result in up to six months in jail
<b>Who To Contact</b>	Contact your local law enforcement to complain about a potentially unruly gathering



## What Can Parents Do To Help?

- ✓ Monitor alcohol use in your home – keep track of the supply
- ✓ Develop family norms about teen drinking, set a good example, and don't allow unsupervised parties
- ✓ Connect with other parents and share information about the Social Host Ordinance
- ✓ Don't support teen drinking – don't supply alcohol to minors or provide a place for teens to drink

# Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Social Host Ordinances

## **Why should parents be held accountable for their child's actions if they are out of town and told them not to throw a party?**

*Parents should not assume that they do not have responsibility for their children when they leave town with the child (or children) at home. Parents are responsible for their children's actions until they turn 18.*

## **Why should my community tell parents what to do with their own children?**

*A social host ordinance is not intended to address familial gatherings, such as family dinners. The purpose of the ordinance is to address and deter underage drinking parties that are a threat to public health and safety. A social host ordinance works to reinforce a parent's reasonable expectation that their child will be safe when they go to another adult's home.*

## **Isn't it safer for teens to drink supervised? Won't they just drink somewhere else?**

*Communities with social host laws see declines in binge drinking and drinking and driving. "Supervised" drinking ignores other serious problems associated with these kinds of teen parties – alcohol poisoning, sexual assault, other physical violence, and addiction.*

## **Isn't providing alcohol to minors already against the law?**

*Selling, serving, or facilitating alcohol to minors is already against the law. This ordinance, however, addresses a different issue – that of hosting a party on private property such as a home. It means that anyone who allows minors to drink will be cited under the ordinance.*

## **Do we really need a new law?**

*California does not currently have a law that pertains specifically to the hosts of gatherings where alcohol is served, consumed by, or in the possession of minors. This ordinance fills a gap in California's underage drinking laws.*



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*The Contra Costa Friday Night Live Partnership services are provided by the Center for Human Development and funded by Contra Costa Health Services, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Division.*



## Where Can I Get More Information?

Center for Human Development – Friday Night Live  
Emily Justice (925) 687-8844, x222

Contra Costa Health Services – AOD Services Division  
Fatima Matal Sol (925) 313-6311

Contra Costa Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board  
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