

Not in Our House

A Nationwide Initiative on Underage Drinking and Social Hosting
Parent/Community Coordinators Guide



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International Institute for
Alcohol Awareness



Your Goal: Securing the Best for Students

Dear Parent/Community Coordinator or PTA/PTO President:

As leader of your local parent-teacher organization, you have the opportunity and responsibility to get involved in issues that can affect students' learning and their futures.

Underage drinking presents an enormous public health issue to all Americans! New research suggests that adolescents who drink show higher rates of academic problems and poorer performance in school. This can have a profound impact on the success of your school and its students.

Nearly everyone knows that it is against U.S. law for young people under age 21 to drink alcohol. But you may not be aware that to uphold the law and to prevent underage drinking, some state and local governments are passing **social host liability laws**.

Social hosting is providing and/or serving alcohol to a young person who is under the minimum age of 21. Social hosting can take place in a party-like atmosphere or by any adult simply providing alcohol to teenagers and their peers for them to drink. It can even extend to parents and homeowners who are not on the premises and/or did not provide the alcohol.

You and your school could be held accountable if:

- Your school's programs are associated with underage drinking in any way
- Students take part in underage drinking at any school event, such as
 - the prom
 - homecoming
 - sports events

Your high school is participating in **Not in Our House: A Nationwide Initiative on Underage Drinking and Social Hosting**, a new program developed to raise awareness of illegal underage drinking and social host laws in communities throughout the United States. The program takes an innovative approach to the issue by helping adults to be aware of the criminal and civil liability they may face if they host an underage drinking party in the home, and by building communication skills in young people while teaching them



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about the issues. Developed with Scholastic Inc., and generously sponsored by the International Institute for Alcohol Awareness (IIAA) and The Century Council, funded by America's leading distillers, this community-wide initiative comprises targeted materials that are being distributed to parent/community coordinators or PTA/PTO presidents, as well as school administrators, teachers, athletic directors and coaches, students, and parents.

This guide provides everything you need to take a leadership role in implementing this program in your school. We encourage you to distribute the pre-printed Family Flyers, as well as the Family Letter (on the back cover). We hope that, by working with others to limit social hosting and underage access to alcohol, you can protect students in your school from harming themselves and their futures.

CONTENTS

Your Role: Leading the Charge with Families . . . 3	Who's joining you in this mission
Inside This Guide 4	Tools to spread the message
Understanding the Issues 5–6	Underage drinking and social hosting
Social Hosting: How to Talk to Adults 7	Suggestions for communication
Reproducible Tool: Family Letter 8	A joint announcement with your school administrator that can be distributed with the enclosed Family Flyers

Your Role: Leading the Charge with Families

A 2003 report submitted to Congress by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine recommended that “underage drinking cannot be successfully addressed by focusing on youth alone. . . . Efforts to reduce underage drinking, therefore, need to focus on adults and must engage the society at large.”¹

Joining You in This Mission

Your School Administrator has received a kit to help him or her implement the program in school and create awareness and partnerships throughout your community. Each school administrator kit contains:

- **Introductory Letter** to explain the educational and social benefits of the program while enlisting the aid of your school community.
- **Administrators Guide** to further define the issues and provide important tools for spreading the program’s message throughout the school and community.

Your School’s Athletic Director/Coaching Staff has received a kit to raise awareness among student athletes, their families, and sports boosters. Each kit contains:

- **Coaches Guide** to provide information as well as communication tools for coaches.



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- **Full-Color Poster** (2 copies) to communicate the program’s messaging to student athletes in an eye-catching and dramatic way.

Your School’s 9th- and 10th-Grade Language Arts Teachers

have received a language arts education program that builds students’ communication and advocacy skills while raising awareness of the issues of social hosting and underage drinking. Each teacher kit includes:

- **Teachers Program Guide**, which includes an overview of the program, national standards met by the program, and additional resources.
- **Poster/Teaching Guide**, which features an 8-page Teaching Guide and a full-color classroom poster.
- **Student Magazine** (60 copies), which features articles and communication tools to encourage skill building and advocacy.

Reach out to other school activity leaders who have strong parent and family connections! These program materials may easily be shared with heads of other school groups, such as drama teachers, band leaders, and leaders of after-school activities.



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1. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, Committee on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking, Richard J. Bonnie and Mary Ellen O’Connell, editors, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2003.

Inside This Guide

Tools to Spread the Message

These turnkey tools provide everything you need to communicate the message of **Not in Our House** to members' families and others outside the school community. Take time now to review each tool's purpose along with ideas on how it can be used to spread the word.

Your Program Guide

In this booklet, you will find the facts, resources, and reproducible tools you need to spread the program's message to your organization's members and other families within your community. Turnkey tools include:

Social Hosting: How to Talk to Adults—Page 7

Talking points and sample questions to help you speak to parents and other adults about social hosting.

- Review this page prior to discussions with members and other parents.
- Schedule a special meeting night and use this page as a guide to addressing parents and other adults about social hosting and underage drinking. Invite speakers from local government and law enforcement to talk about the laws (or lack of laws) in your community.

Announcement Letter Template to Families—Page 8

From both your school administrator and you, this joint letter is intended to spread the message about this program to families, and to reinforce the school's policies toward underage alcohol consumption in school, at school-related events, and at underage gatherings in private homes.

- Work with the school administrator to assist in developing and implementing procedures your school can follow when faced with an underage alcohol-related incident at a sports event or any other school-related event.

Family Handout (100 printed copies included)

This double-sided sheet, which can also be reproduced, helps you send the message about social hosting and underage drinking home to your school's families, as well as other families in your community. It includes:

- Key Statistics, Laws, and Liability: Alarming statistics about underage teens and their access to alcohol as well

as information and research that clearly explains to parents the risks and penalties associated with hosting underage drinking parties.

- Social Hosting: How to Talk to Adults: Talking points that will help you speak to parents and other adults about the issues and risks involved in social hosting.
- Take Action! What You Can Do: Provides families with ideas and suggestions to help keep their children safe and alcohol-free at home and in their friends' homes.

Network with Other Parent/Community Coordinators or PTA/PTO Presidents

Share the information in this program with other parent/community coordinators or PTA/PTO presidents.

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Understanding the Issues

Underage Drinking and Social Hosting

Social Host Laws and Liability

One of the most effective ways to reduce teenage drinking is by making a broad societal commitment to reducing underage access to alcohol.² Developing laws that hold adults liable when they host underage drinking parties is a way to deter these parties. Currently, individual states and communities are responsible for enacting and enforcing their own laws regarding social host responsibility. Social host liability refers to laws that hold noncommercial individuals (social hosts) responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease, or otherwise control. An adult does not need to actually serve or provide alcohol to guests to violate the law, or even be on the premises when the drinking occurs. And the adult can be held accountable even if no injury or property damage has occurred.

These laws vary by state and community and may allow local governments to add to them, or prohibit local governments from adding to them. Know your own local laws before addressing the issue in your school and community. For more information about social host laws and laws regarding the hosting of underage drinking parties in all 50 states, visit the Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS) Web site at www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov.

Startling Statistics

- More than three out of every four students have had alcohol by the end of high school. More than half of 12th-graders and a fifth of 8th-graders have been drunk at least once.³
- In recent surveys of high school students, 93 percent of 12th-graders and 64 percent of 8th-graders reported that alcohol is “fairly” or “very” easy to get.⁴
- Research has indicated that one typical way underage youth procure alcohol is at parties where parents and other adults have left them unsupervised.⁵
- Alcohol is linked with an estimated 5,000 deaths in people under age 21 each year—more than all illegal drugs combined.⁶
- Sixty-five percent of underage youth who drink reported obtaining alcohol from family and friends.⁷

The National Minimum Drinking Age

In 1971, following the enactment of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which lowered the minimum voting age to 18, twenty-nine states lowered their drinking ages. In the 1980s, amid public concern over the lowered minimum drinking ages and research linking the lower ages with an increase in alcohol-related car crashes, states began to return the minimum drinking age to 21.

In 1984, Congress enacted the National Minimum Drinking Age Act, a current law that withholds a portion of Federal Highway Funds from states that do not have a minimum drinking age of 21. By 1988, all fifty states (plus Washington, D.C.) had passed legislation to meet the federal funding requirements outlined in the act.

2. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, Committee on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2003. 3. Johnston, L.S.; O'Malley, P.M.; Bachman, J.G.; and Schulenberg, J.E., 2006, *Monitoring the Future national results on adolescent drug use: Overview of key findings*, 2005 (NIH Publication No. 06-5882), Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse. 4. Johnston, L.S., et al., 2006. 5. Jones-Webb, R., et al., 1997, “Relationships among alcohol availability, drinking location, alcohol consumption and drinking problems in adolescents,” *Substance Use and Misuse* 32, 1261–1285. 6. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, “Underage Drinking: Why Do Adolescents Drink, What Are the Risks, and How Can Underage Drinking Be Prevented?” *Alcohol Alert* 67, January 2006. 7. Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) for The Century Council, Omnibuzz, 2003.



Understanding the Issues

Underage Drinking and Social Hosting (continued)

Parent Issues

Two separate surveys conducted by The American Medical Association in 2005⁸ reveal the following statistics:

- About one in four (26 percent) U.S. parents with children (aged 12 to 20) agree that teens should be able to drink at home with their parents present. A quarter of these parents admitted to allowing their children to do so.
- Two out of three teens (aged 13 to 18) said it is easy to get alcohol from their homes without their parents knowing it.
- Thirty-three percent of teens responded that it is easy to obtain alcohol from their own parents (knowingly); this increases to 40 percent when it is from a friend's parent.
- One in four teens have attended a party where underage youth were drinking in front of parents.

When addressing the issues of social hosting and underage drinking, one of the most compelling reasons you can give adults for not providing alcohol to underage youth or allowing underage drinking events to occur on their property—outside of the risks of alcohol-related injuries and/or death—is liability (civil and criminal). Liability, including possible jail time, fines and lawsuits, and the public humiliation that can come about as a result, can be as compelling as, if not even more than, the other risks associated with teenage drinking (sexual assault, pregnancy, violence, health issues). See page 7 for suggestions on how to speak with families regarding these issues.

Other Key Terms to Know

Heavy drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks on the same occasion (i.e., at the same time or within a couple of hours of each other) at least once in the past 30 days. Drinking large amounts of alcohol at one time or very rapidly can cause alcohol poisoning, which can lead to coma or even death.^{9,10}

Zero-tolerance laws make it illegal for people under age 21 to drive with any measurable amount of alcohol in their blood. Zero-tolerance laws, especially when coupled with administrative license revocation (ALR), act as an effective deterrent for young people who consider drinking and driving.

Administrative license revocation (ALR) is the immediate removal of the driver's license (without regard to a criminal conviction) of a person who has failed or refuses a breath test. Legislation is under way in several states to establish ALR for any adult who knowingly furnishes alcohol to a minor.

Dram shop laws hold retail establishments, such as restaurants and bars, accountable for any death, injury, or damage caused by an intoxicated patron. Licensees can be held accountable in several ways: criminally, through civil fines, or through tort liability. Dram shop

laws apply to sales to minors without regard to their state of intoxication and apply to service to adults only if they are visibly or obviously intoxicated. These laws vary by state.

BAC (blood-alcohol concentration) is measured in grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood. A BAC of .01 indicates .01 grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood. The risk of a fatal crash for drivers with positive BACs compared with other drivers (i.e., the relative risk) increases with increasing BAC, and the risks increase more steeply for drivers younger than 21 than for older drivers.¹¹

Alcohol Equivalency: A standard drink is 14 grams of pure alcohol, which is equal to one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.¹²

Where You Can Find Out More

- www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov The Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS), a project of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, provides detailed information on a wide variety of alcohol-related policies throughout the United States at both state and federal levels.
- www.ncadi.samhsa.gov The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a public-health agency in the Department of Health and Human Services, is an online clearinghouse for alcohol and drug information.
- www.iaaonline.org The International Institute for Alcohol Awareness (IAAA) collaborates with government, business, and public-health groups on various underage drinking issues. On its Web site you can find underage drinking fact sheets for each state.
- www.centurycouncil.org The Century Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to fighting drunk driving and underage drinking.

Publications

- *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility.* Committee on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking. Richard J. Bonnie and Mary Ellen O'Connell, editors. National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2003.

8. "Teenage Drinking: Key Findings," a summary of surveys conducted for the American Medical Association by Teen Research Unlimited and Harris Interactive, Spring 2005 (www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/388/keyfindings.pdf). 9. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, September 3, 2002. 10. Wechsler, Henry, Ph.D.; Jae Eun Lee, DrPH; Meichun Kuo, ScD; Mark Seibring, BA, BS; Toben F. Nelson, MS; and Hang Lee, Ph.D., "Trends in College Binge Drinking During a Period of Increased Prevention Efforts," *Journal of American College Health* 50, No. 5, March 2002. 11. Zador, P.L.; Krawchuck, S.A.; and Voas, R.B., "Alcohol-related relative risk of driver fatalities and driver involvement in fatal crashes in relation to driver age and gender: An update using 1996 data," *J Stud Alcohol* 61: 387–395, 2000. 12. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, *A Pocket Guide for Alcohol Screening and Brief Prevention*, 2005.



COMMUNICATIONS TOOL

Social Hosting: How to Talk to Adults

Topics to Talk About:

Use personal anecdotes about underage drinking/social hosting from your school and/or community.

- Show parents the real statistics regarding the dangers associated with underage drinking and social hosting, including the many that are in this guide. Remind them that statistics do not lie.
- Discuss what could possibly happen if they host a party where underage drinking could occur. Consequences could include jail time, fines, public humiliation, property damage, DUI/DWI, sexual assault/rape, alcohol poisoning, and violence.
- Discuss the negative physical effects of underage alcohol consumption on school performance and how it may affect a teen's future goals for college.
- Research the social host laws in your state and distribute copies of them. If your state does not have any laws, discuss why it is important that such laws be adopted.
- Some parents struggle with whether to restrict their teen's drinking, despite the laws. Explain that it is against the law to allow someone to drink who is under 21 years old. By violating the law, you are sending your teen and his or her friends a message that can have dangerous consequences.

What exactly is "social hosting"?

Social hosting is providing and/or serving alcohol to a young person who is under the minimum age of 21. Social hosting can take place in a party-like atmosphere or by any adult simply providing alcohol to teenagers and their peers for them to drink. It can even extend to parents and homeowners who are not on the premises and/or did not provide the alcohol.

Who can be held responsible?

This depends on the laws in your area and how specific they are.

If your area has social host liability laws:

- Social host liability refers to laws that hold noncommercial individuals (social hosts) responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease, or otherwise control. Adults who serve or provide alcohol to an underage youth can be held criminally liable if that youth is killed or injured—or if that youth kills or injures someone else.
- The laws can extend to include adults who don't take sufficient measures to stop underage drinking—even if they are not home when the drinking occurs.
- Adults may also be held responsible if underage drinking takes place anywhere on their property, not just inside their home.
- It is illegal simply to host a party where underage youth are drinking. Adults, older family members, and friends can be arrested if they allow underage drinking to occur with their knowledge, even if they did not provide the alcohol. No one has to get hurt—all it takes is alcohol being present at the party.

What are the consequences?

- You could pay a fine, serve jail time, and/or have your driver's license suspended.
- Your homeowner's insurance may increase. (Most policies don't cover damage or theft from underage drinking.)
- Legislation is pending in some states that would immediately suspend the driver's license of any adult who knowingly furnishes alcohol to anyone under 21.
- Another adult can hold you civilly liable, and any injuries, alcohol poisoning, or sexual assaults that occur may result in lawsuits.
- You could be charged for medical bills or property damage, or sued for emotional suffering or pain.
- Worst of all, someone could become injured or die.

Urgent Family Information

Get the Facts about Underage Drinking and Social Hosting

Dear Family,

In school, your teenager is taking part in **Not in Our House: A Nationwide Initiative on Underage Drinking and Social Hosting**. This program has been developed to raise awareness of illegal underage drinking and social host laws in communities throughout the United States.

Did You Know?

Nearly everyone knows that it is against the law in the United States for young people under age 21 to drink alcohol. But you may not be aware that to uphold the law and to prevent underage drinking, some state governments are limiting youth access to alcohol by passing **social host liability laws**.

Social hosting is providing and/or serving alcohol to a young person who is under the minimum age of 21. Social hosting can take place in a party-like atmosphere or by any adult simply providing alcohol to teenagers and their peers for them to drink. It can even extend to parents and homeowners who are not on the premises and/or did not provide the alcohol.

You Could Be Held Liable:

- You could be held civilly and criminally liable for serving or providing alcohol to underage guests.
- You could also be held civilly or criminally liable for simply providing the location for the underage drinking party without actually serving or providing the alcohol to underage guests.
- The penalties for breaking these laws are possible jail time, fines, and civil lawsuits—as well as the public humiliation that goes along with them.
- In addition, legislation is pending in some states that would immediately suspend the driver's license of any adult who knowingly furnishes alcohol to anyone under 21.
- By violating the law, you are sending your teen and his or her friends a message that can have dangerous consequences.

What You Can Do:

Take time to listen to your teenager and share your thoughts about the legal risks associated with social hosting.

- Create an atmosphere in your home and community where such behavior is not acceptable and offer healthy alternatives to underage drinking.
- Get informed about state and local laws in your area that penalize underage drinking parties and providing alcohol to youth.
- If no such laws exist, work with other parents and members of your community to lobby government to implement and enforce state social host laws that keep young people safe.

You will be receiving a handout through our school's parent/community coordinator or PTA/PTO president with further information about social hosting. Please read it and work with us to prevent social hosting and underage drinking so our young people will be protected from harming themselves and their futures.

Sincerely,

(School Administrator)

(Parent/Community Coordinator or PTA/PTO President)

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