

What Florida Law Says About Underage Drinking

1. Can a parent server alcohol at home to his/her own teenager? Excluding religious practices, no. it is illegal for anyone to provide anyone under age of 21 with alcohol.
2. What legal consequences face a parent who hosts a gathering where teenagers consume alcohol? They can go to jail for 60 days. They can be held civilly & criminally liable for injury or damages that occur as result.
3. What if a teenager is just holding a beer? The teen is breaking the law and can be adjudicated delinquent on the basis of possession of an alcoholic beverage, even if he/she is not drinking it.
4. What legal consequences face a teenager who purchases alcohol with a fake ID? Using a fake ID to purchase alcohol is a crime. The teen may have his/her driver's license revoked or may be prohibited from obtaining a driver's license.
5. Where can I report a party where underage drinking is occurring? You may report a party anonymously at any time to the sheriff's office.

What is SOCIAL HOSTING?

Social hosting is providing and/or serving alcohol to a young person who is under age 21. Hosting can take place in a party-like atmosphere or anytime someone provides alcohol to young people and their friends for the purpose of drinking. It can even extend to parents and homeowners who are not home, out of town, or unaware that underage drinking is taking place in their home.

What PARENTS should know

If you host a party for underage drinkers, you are sending a message to teens that it is okay to break the law. The question is, which laws do you decide can be broken? You may think you are doing teens a favor by allowing them to drink in a safe environment. The truth is there is no safe environment for underage drinking.

As a host, you can't predict the behavior of teens drinking in your home or the amount of alcohol that will be consumed. If injuries, alcohol poisoning or sexual assaults occur on your property, you can be held criminally liable.

Teens and their HEALTH

The brain goes through dynamic changes during adolescence. Studies have shown that judgment is the last area of the brain to develop. A person who begins drinking as a teen is four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood to consume alcohol.

Teens who drink alcohol are more likely to become sexually active, placing them at greater risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. Short-term or moderate drinking impairs learning and memory in teens. Teens only need to drink half as much alcohol as adults to suffer the same negative effects.

Promote RESPONSIBILITY

What happens in your home affects the community. Teens naturally want adult privileges. Our job as parents and guardians is to make them understand that alcohol is a drug and consuming it as a teen is harmful to their health and well-being. It is also illegal for the teens to consume it and for adults to provide it.

Parents and other adults need to remember that they are the greatest influence on the decisions teens make. Parents also bear the primary responsibility for their teen's misconduct.

Don't Support Teen Drinking. Your attitudes and behavior toward teen drinking also influence your child. Avoid making jokes about underage drinking or drunkenness, or otherwise showing acceptance of teen alcohol use. In addition, never serve alcohol to your child's underage friends. Research shows that kids whose parents or friends' parents provide alcohol for teen get-togethers are more likely to engage in heavier drinking, to drink more often, and to get into traffic crashes.

Too often at graduation and prom time, well-meaning parents host parties at which they serve alcohol to their children and their children's friends. In an effort to provide a controlled event, they unwittingly support teen drinking.

It's your incredibly tough job to convince your child that alcohol is not an option. When parents "bargain" with youth, allowing them to drink as long as they promise not to drive, the youth are more likely to drive after drinking or be in a car with someone drinking.

It's tough to sort through all the mixed messages that society promotes about alcohol. Your child deserves a clear, uncompromising message from you.

Tips for Parents

When your Teen...

...Attends A Party

A. Know where your teen will be.

1. Obtain the name, address and phone number of the party host
2. Let your teen know you expect a phone call to obtain permission if the location of the party is changed.

B. Contact the parents of the party host to:

1. Be sure that a parent will be present.
2. Offer assistance.
3. Confirm that alcohol and other drugs will not be permitted.

C. Communicate concerns.

1. Discuss with your teen the possible situations which might arise and how to deal with them. For example, what to do if another adult (older sibling, etc.) offers to make alcohol available for minors.
2. Let them know where you can be reached.
3. Agree on an acceptable curfew.
4. Assure your teen that you or a specified friend or neighbor can be called if he/she needs a ride home.
5. Be awake or have your teen awaken you when he/she arrives home. (This is often a good sharing time.)
6. If your teen is staying overnight with a friend following a party, check with the parents of the friend to verify that:
 - This is acceptable to them.
 - They will be home.
 - You both agree on curfew hours and other basic house rules.

...Hosts A Party

A. Parents must be at the party.

1. No parents = no party.
2. A home minus adult supervision is asking for trouble.
3. Parents have a responsibility to see it that parties are conducted in an appropriate manner.

B. Set ground rules with your teen beforehand.

1. Let your teen know your expectations: they do want guidelines.
2. Let them know how you feel about drug and alcohol use.
3. Become involved with your teen in planning party activities. Agree on an appropriate guest list and stick to it. Determine in advance how party crashers will be handled.
4. Remind your teen that he/she is accountable for his/her behavior.
5. Notify your neighbors beforehand.
6. Decide what parts of the house will be used, leaving the lights on in these parts. Bedrooms and other areas should be off limits.

C. Alcohol or other drugs should not be permitted, served or available.

1. Be alert to the signs of alcohol or drug use.
2. Guests who attempt to bring alcohol or drugs or who otherwise are uncooperative or uninvited should be promptly told to leave.
3. Have a plan to implement if anyone arrives at the party under the influence of alcohol or another drug. Do not let a person drive when under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

4. Anyone who leaves the party should not be allowed to return. This will discourage people from leaving with the intent of drinking or using drugs elsewhere and then returning to the party.
5. Be visible – bring in snacks, etc. Your visibility will keep the party running smoothly and will give you an opportunity to meet your teen’s friends.
6. Ask other responsible adults to help chaperone the party.
7. Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks, and a wide variety of activities available.
8. If you feel that despite your precautions things do get out of hand, please do not hesitate to call the local law enforcement.
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What parents can do to stop UNDERAGE DRINKING...

- 1 Talk with your teen and let him or her know your expectations. Teens need clear behavior guidelines and boundaries.
- 2 Ask questions about your teen’s daily life. Listen to his or her opinions and concerns.
- 3 Talk with your teen. Get to know your teen’s friends and who their parents are. Always know what your teen is doing and who he or she is with.
- 4 Have your teen check in with you regularly from a landline phone, not a cell phone. If they are at a friend’s house or attending a party, call or stop by to check on them.
- 5 tell your teen that even if he or she is some place where adults are drinking, they are NOT to drink under any circumstances.
- 6 Spend time on a regular basis with your teen doing one-on-one or family activities.

GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN!

Today our lives seem busier than ever. Parents tend to get wrapped up in their jobs, volunteer activities, and/or their social lives. Children grow up too quickly. Make time for them. Set aside specific times to be with your children. Make a breakfast or dinner date with each child. One-on-ones do wonders. LISTEN to teenagers. They have much to say if you give them the chance.

GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN’S FRIENDS!

Include them in some of your activities – invite them to supper - encourage gatherings in your home - even take friends on vacations.

GET TO KNOW THE PARENTS OF YOUR CHILDREN’S FRIENDS!

Plan dual family functions: casual potluck suppers, the theater, or a sporting event. Attend local meetings together. Create a *parent network* among your child’s current friends. Parental communication is the key.

ACKNOWLEDGE PEER PRESSURE but *expect* your child to have the courage and self-esteem to say **NO**. Children want to live up to high ideals.

FAMILY MEMBERS MUST PUT EACH OTHER FIRST!

A close family unit gives strength to each of its members.