

Parents Who Host Lose the Most: Laws and Tips

It is illegal in NJ to serve alcohol to anyone who is under the legal drinking age of 21 (NJSA 2C:33-17a)

- Parents who give alcohol to their teen's friends under any circumstances, even in their own homes, are breaking the law
- Parents who knowingly allow a person under 21 to remain in their home or on their property while consuming or possessing alcoholic beverages can be prosecuted
- It is illegal in NJ to make your home or property available for the purpose of allowing anyone who is under the legal drinking age of 21 a place to consume alcohol (NJSA 2C:33-17b)
- Any person who serves or makes alcohol available to a person under the legal drinking age of 21 is subject to a \$1,000 fine and up to 180 days in jail per person served. Parents can be held civilly liable even if they are not present during the time of the party (NJSA 2C:33-17)
- If serving an underage person alcohol results in injury, the adult may be charged with Endangering the Welfare of Children, and may be subject to a fine of up to \$15,000 and up to 5 years in state prison (NJSA 2C:24-4)
- New Jersey Law imposes civil liability on social hosts who serve alcohol to anyone under the legal drinking age of 21 who is subsequently involved in an incident causing injury or death
- A social host may be sued for up to two years after an incident that occurs resulting in injury or death. As the result of a lawsuit, your house, car, and bank accounts may be seized and future wages may be garnished.

Suggestions for parents if a teen party is hosted at your residence:

- Help your teenager plan the party. Make a guest list and invite only a specific number of people.
- Don't send email invitations. They can be forwarded to a large number of people quickly and you lose control of who has this information.
- Put your phone number on the invitation and welcome calls from parents.
- **Set rules ahead of time** such as no alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Set a start and end time for the party.
- Let attendees know that if they leave, they cannot come back.
- Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Let your neighbors know in advance there will be a party and that you will be there to supervise.
- Have a plan for dealing with vehicles. Include parking information on your party invitation.
- Secure all forms of alcohol, firearms and other potentially hazardous items in your home.
- Make regular and unobtrusive visits to the party area with sensitivity to teens' needs for privacy and independence.
- Invite other parents to help chaperone if there will be a large number of teenagers.

When you're away from home or out of town:

- Set and communicate rules and standards to be followed in your absence.
- Do not allow underage youth to have unsupervised parties or gatherings.
- Remind them of their responsibilities and the consequences of their actions.

- Have a relative or responsible adult stay at your home during your absence, have your teenager stay with a responsible adult or ask a neighbor to watch the house and stop in while you are gone.

If a teen is attending a party in someone else's home: