

Social Host Ordinance

WHAT IS A SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE?

- The primary purpose of the ordinance is to deter underage drinking parties where adults knowingly provide the premise for youth to drink.
- Frequently these parties are high risk settings for binge drinking and associated problems (drunk driving, unprotected sex, alcohol poisoning etc.)¹
- Very young drinkers are often introduced to heavy drinking behaviors at these events¹.
- Law enforcement officials report that, in many cases, underage drinking parties occur on private property, but the adult responsible for the property is not present or cannot be shown to have furnished the alcohol.
- Current laws prohibit the provision of alcohol to minors, but not providing the premises to drink.
- “Endangering a minor” can be used to prosecute adults for providing the premises for an underage drinking party for youth under 18; however this law does not apply to youth ages 18-20.
- An ordinance that establishes liability for social hosts addresses these loop-holes by providing a legal basis for holding adults responsible for knowingly allowing parties for youth up to age 20 to occur on their property whether or not they provided the alcohol.

1. National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2003

THE SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE IS NOT

- It is not a means to target innocent parents, guardians, or property owners.
- To charge an adult with a violation of the social host ordinance, law enforcement will have to provide proof that the adult knowingly provided the premises for a party.



SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE NEWS

- The Social Host Ordinance passed its second reading at the Billings City Council on 4/27/09.
- It will go into effect on May 27, 2009, and give police one more tool to reduce youth access to alcohol.

