



# Social Host Ordinance

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is a Social Host Ordinance?** The Town of Yucca Valley's Social Host Ordinance is a municipal law that holds hosts accountable if they allow minors to consume alcohol or other illegal substances on private property at parties or gatherings.

**We already have laws to prevent underage drinking, why do we need a Social Host Ordinance too?** When answering a complaint at a party, it is very difficult for law enforcement officers to prove who provided the alcohol to underage persons. A Social Host Ordinance holds the host of the gathering responsible regardless of whether they provided the alcohol, so they must make sure underage drinking does not occur at their party.

**Doesn't the State of California and County of San Bernardino already have Social Host Ordinances?** Yes, but the California law is applicable only when an injury, death, or property damage occurs, and the County law does not address illegal substances as well as alcohol. The Town's Youth Commission, which recommended adoption of the ordinance to Town Council, recommended a stronger Social Host Ordinance to deal with the problem of alcohol and substance abuse by youth in the community.

**Why focus on house parties?** House parties have been identified as the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol. Other laws address commercial sales of alcohol to minors, but there is work to be done to reduce underage drinking in social settings. Studies show that teens who consume alcohol at house parties are more likely to engage in heavier and more frequent drinking.

**I don't see anything wrong with youth drinking at someone's residence where there is a responsible adult supervising. If they're going to drink, isn't this the best kind of setting in which it could happen?** First, it is illegal to serve alcohol to minors, and we do not want to send a message to our teens that it is OK to break the law. Second, we should not assume that teens are going to drink and use illegal substances no matter what. Underage drinking and substance abuse are public health and safety issues. Research shows the negative and possibly long term effects of alcohol and illegal substances on the developing adolescent.

**How does a Social Host Ordinance help reduce and prevent underage drinking parties?** A Social Host Ordinance acts as a deterrent, making parents aware of the consequences of underage drinking and more active in preventing it from happening. These laws also provide law enforcement with a tool for responding to parties where underage drinking is occurring and reinforces a clear community message that underage drinking is unacceptable.

**Does a Social Host Ordinance make it illegal for parents to give alcohol to their own children?** No. The ordinance is designed to address social gatherings where underage drinking is occurring by teens, often being served by a host who is not their parent.

**Will I be held responsible if my teen hosts a party at my home where underage drinking takes place without my knowledge?** Parents may not be responsible if they did not know about the party. The ordinance addresses the host who knowingly hosts, permits or allows the gathering.

**Can we still invite teens to our party if there is going to be alcohol there?** Yes. You will just be responsible for making sure they do not possess or consume the alcohol. Being in close proximity to alcohol is not the same as possession.

**How is the Social Host Ordinance enforced? What are the penalties?** When law enforcement responds to a gathering where underage drinking or use of illegal substances is reported, the host of the event can be issued a citation and charged with a misdemeanor for violating the Social Host Ordinance. Charges can be civil, criminal or administrative.

**How can I find out more?** To view the full text of Yucca Valley's Social Host Ordinance visit the Youth Commission page of the Town of Yucca Valley's website at: <http://www.yucca-valley.org/youthcomm/index.html>. Other questions can be referred to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department at (760) 365-9413 or Yucca Valley Town Hall at (760) 369-7207.

This information should not be considered legal advice. Consult an attorney regarding your rights and responsibilities in a particular situation.