BACKGROUND
The Social Host Ordinance was enacted to deter underage drinking parties and hold the hosts of such parties accountable since many underage persons obtain alcohol through social sources such as older friends, siblings, parents and/or strangers they encounter in party situations. Alcohol is youth’s number one drug of choice and underage drinkers are more likely to be victims of crime, including sexual assault. What’s more, underage drinking is a factor in nearly half of all teen automobile crashes.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE?
The Social Host Ordinance would hold individuals (social hosts) criminally responsible for hosting or permitting an event or gathering on private or public property where persons under 21 years of age possess or consume alcohol, regardless of who supplied the alcohol.

This ordinance applies to situations in which the social host knows or has reason to know that alcohol is being possessed or consumed by persons under 21 years of age at their gathering.

Under this ordinance, the social host does not have to be present at the party, event or gathering to be criminally responsible.

The ordinance does not apply to conduct solely between an underage person and his/her parents in the parent’s household and legally protected religious observances.

WHAT IS AN “EVENT OR GATHERING?”
An “event or gathering” means a group of persons who have assembled on private property or in a public place for a social occasion or other activity.

WHAT IS THE PENALTY FOR VIOLATION?
A violation of this ordinance is a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and/or a $1,000 fine.

HOW TO BE A RESPONSIBLE HOST
To protect your guests, yourself and others and reduce your exposure to alcohol-related liability, if you are hosting a party where persons under 21 years of age are present, you should...

1. Verify the age of guests.
2. Control access to alcohol.
3. Control the quantity of alcohol.
4. Supervise persons under 21 years of age.
5. Be courteous to your neighbors and keep the party noise down.
6. Refuse entrance to uninvited people, especially the ones who arrive at the door with alcohol or are already intoxicated.
7. Call the Police for assistance with uninvited people.

FAQs
Will I be held liable if I’m away for the weekend and my kids have a party at my home?
• No. If you did not know about the party, event or gathering.
• Yes. If you knew about the party or had reason to know that underage drinking was occurring and did nothing to prevent it.

If my housemate hosts a party in our apartment while I am away, can I still be held criminally liable?
Maybe. It depends on what knowledge you have about the party and if you took any steps to assist in hosting the gathering.

Can I be held liable if my tenant has an underage drinking party on my property?
Maybe. It depends on whether or not you actually participated in hosting or permitting the party where alcohol was present.

HOW TO REPORT A POSSIBLE VIOLATION
To report parties or gatherings where minors have access to alcohol, call 9-1-1. Your call may prevent motor vehicle crashes, sexual assault, unintentional injuries, or alcohol poisoning.