

PARENTS: REDUCING YOUTH Access to Alcohol

As a parent, you play a critical role in whether or not your child drinks alcohol underage. You control the availability of alcohol in the household, serve as role model for alcohol use, influence family norms on alcohol use, and set alcohol-related household expectations. Nevertheless, the efforts of even the most conscientious parents can be challenged by easy youth access to alcohol throughout the community.

The following strategies can help you play an active role in reducing your child's access to alcohol.

Monitor the alcohol supply in the home

You can reduce your child's access to alcohol by keeping alcohol out of the home or making it difficult to access. Store alcohol in a locked cabinet or closet, or closely keep track of the alcohol stored in your home. Discuss your household expectations about alcohol in the home with your child as well.

Talk with other parents

Get to know the parents of your child's friends and classmates to create an open line of communication when your child is socializing outside of the home. Discuss whether or not alcohol is accessible to youth and if parties or gatherings occurring in other homes are supervised by adults.

Never provide alcohol to your child or their underage friends

It is illegal to provide alcohol to any person under age 21, and doing so could result in criminal prosecution and civil lawsuits. Additionally, it may send the message that underage drinking is okay and potentially increase the likelihood of alcohol-related problems down the line.

Begin or join community efforts to reduce youth access to alcohol

As a parent, you are often one of the most visible and effective leaders in protecting the health and safety of children in your community. Contact your local public health agency or school to become involved in efforts to prevent underage drinking. In addition, you can:

- Meet with city council members to pass local ordinances to reduce youth access to alcohol.
- Meet with owners and managers of alcohol establishments to encourage them to adopt practices to reduce sales to youth.
- Encourage local law enforcement to conduct compliance checks, keeping retail establishments accountable for selling alcohol to minors.
- Encourage faith organizations, schools, and other groups to implement policies to reduce underage access to alcohol on their property and at their events.

5X

Research has shown that children who have been given sips of alcohol by sixth grade are five times more likely to have a full drink by the time they reach high school and four times more likely to binge drink.¹



What are Social Host Liability Laws?

Social host refers to adults who host parties where alcohol is served to minors on property they control. Through social host liability laws, adults can be held responsible for these parties if underage individuals are served, regardless of who furnishes the alcohol or whether they were aware the party was occurring. These laws are proven to have a positive impact in preventing underage access to alcohol through social means.

As of February 2021, Grand Forks is the only community in North Dakota to have a social host liability law.

North Dakota Underage Drinking Laws for Adults

Regardless of a person's intentions or beliefs about the acceptability of underage alcohol use, it is illegal to provide alcohol to any person under age 21, and doing so could result in criminal prosecution and civil lawsuits.

- It is illegal for adults to provide alcohol to individuals underage or to allow them to consume alcohol in their home or on their property.
- If an underage individual becomes very ill or dies from alcohol poisoning, the adult can be charged with a crime.
- If an adult rents a hotel room for a child to hold a party and alcohol is involved, they could be held responsible for anything that happens.

Criminal Penalties

If an adult knowingly provides alcohol to underage individuals, they are committing a crime and can be fined and jailed.

Civil Liability

If an adult hosts a party with underage drinking, regardless of their knowledge of the party, they can be held liable for any damages or injuries that occur as a result—even after the party ends.

For example, you can be sued if an underage drinker gets into a traffic accident after leaving your home, causing injury to another person. And if you knowingly broke the law, your homeowner's insurance will likely not cover the cost as well.



¹Jackson, K.M., Barnett, N.P., Colby, S.M., and Rogers, M.L. (2015). The Prospective association between sipping alcohol by the sixth grade and later substance use. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 76(2), 212–221. Retrieved from: <http://www.jsad.com/doi/abs/10.15288/jsad.2015.76.212>.