

Social Host Ordinance

Designed to deter underage drinking in Carver County

The Carver County Attorney's Office recently proposed a Social Host Ordinance to the Board of Commissioners. The Chaska Police Department, Carver County Sheriff's Office and Carver County Public Health Division join in supporting this ordinance as a means to deter underage alcohol consumption in the county and offer these FAQs on the ordinance.

Q: What is the Social Host Ordinance?

A: The proposed Social Host Ordinance would hold individuals (social hosts) criminally responsible for hosting or allowing an event on private or public property where persons under age 21 possess or consume alcohol, regardless of who supplied the alcohol to the minors.

This ordinance applies to situations in which:

- ◆ The social host **knows or reasonably should know** that alcohol is being possessed or consumed by underage persons at their residence or premises or at any event they are hosting on public or private property.
- ◆ The social host **fails to take reasonable steps** to prevent possession or consumption by the underage person or persons.

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

Q: Why is the ordinance being proposed?

A: Alcohol is the drug of choice of youth, and alcohol-related incidents are a leading cause of death among teenagers. Alcohol use can lead to traffic accidents, fatalities and property loss, assaults, accidental overdose and suicides. Research shows people who begin drinking alcohol as adolescents are more likely to become chemically dependent.

The Minnesota Student Survey indicates underage youth obtain alcohol at parties. Currently in Carver County, an individual can be charged with furnishing alcohol to an underage person, and individuals under age 21 can be charged with possession or consumption of alcohol. What often happens is law enforcement officers will arrive at a party in which underage youth are drinking alcohol, but they will be unable to determine who provided the alcohol. This ordinance will allow law enforcement to charge the individual who hosts the underage drinking party.

The hope is that imposing criminal responsibility on hosts will have a deterrent effect and reduce the number of underage drinking parties and underage drinking.

Q. How will the ordinance be enforced, and what are the penalties?

A: If enacted, the ordinance will be enforced by the Carver County Sheriff's Office and the Chaska Police Department. Violation of the ordinance will be a misdemeanor subject to a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.

Underage Drinking is a
Don't Let it Happen

Crime.
On Your Property.

Be Responsible.
Help Us Keep Our
Young People Safe.

Q: Will I be held responsible if I am away for the weekend and my kids have a party at my home or if a young person sneaks beer out of my refrigerator or cooler?

A: Parents will not be criminally responsible if they did not know about the party. If the parents knew about the party or gathering, knew that underage drinking was occurring and did nothing to prevent it, they will be criminally responsible. A host is not criminally responsible if a youth sneaks alcohol that is available for adults at a event or gathering unless the adult has indicated that it was OK for the underage person to do so.

Q: How can I voice my opinion?

A: There will be a public hearing on the Social Host Ordinance at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 28, in the County Board Room of the Carver County Government Center. Carver County residents are invited to fill out the Social Host Ordinance survey.



SHERIFF'S OFFICE ♦ ATTORNEY'S OFFICE ♦ PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
GOVERNMENT CENTER ♦ 600 EAST FOURTH STREET ♦ CHASKA, MN 55318
PHONE: 952-361-1500
WEBSITE: WWW.CO.CARVER.MN.US

CHASKA POLICE DEPARTMENT
952-448-4200