



Arcata Fact Sheet

Civil Social Host Ordinance

Social host laws help reduce underage drinking parties and protect young people. They help prevent drinking and driving, alcohol poisoning and neighborhood crime.

What is a civil social host ordinance?

- An adult can be fined for hosting or allowing underage drinking gatherings at a home or other private property.
- The host is the person in control of the premises where the gathering occurs or the person who aids, conducts, allows, or supervises the gathering or event.
- A civil social host ordinance involves fines and civil cost recovery, not criminal charges.

Why does Arcata need this law?

According to California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data from Humboldt County (2019-2021) and Arcata High School (2020-2021):

- Alcohol is the leading drug used on a regular basis by teens in Humboldt County.
- Half of Arcata 11th graders and 61% of Arcata 12th graders report most drinking happens at parties.
- One in ten Arcata 10th graders and one in five Arcata 11th graders report drinking in the last 30 days.
- Nearly 1/5 of Arcata 12th graders have driven a car after drinking or been driven by a friend who has been drinking.

According to Humboldt County emergency room data from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) EPICenter:

- On average, 12 youths per month are treated at local emergency rooms for alcohol-related health incidents.

What is an underage drinking gathering?

- A party or gathering with three or more people at a residence or private property where alcoholic beverages are available to people under 21 years of age.

What is the penalty for violating a civil social host ordinance?

- A person who conducts, allows, or organizes an underage drinking gathering can be charged with an infraction.
- The fines for violation will be decided by the City of Arcata government.
- If the person responsible for the event is under 18 years of age, the parents or guardians of the juvenile may be liable for penalties and response costs.
- Repeat violators will be held responsible for payment of city costs associated with providing police or other public services.
- Criminal liability laws may apply in cases where injury occurs.
- The ordinance does not apply to conduct solely between an underage person and their parents or guardians, or in cases of legally protected religious observances.

What is the Humboldt Allies for Substance Use Prevention (ASUP)?

- Humboldt ASUP is a partnership of local groups and individuals dedicated to preventing and reducing substance use among young people in Humboldt County. Since 2002, the coalition has worked to build a safe and healthy community free of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug related harm.
- To learn more email PublicHealthAOD@co.humboldt.ca.us or call 707-441-5569.