



Fortuna 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. The City of Fortuna enacted a civil Social Host Ordinance in February 2024.

What is a civil social host ordinance?

- An adult host who allows underage drinking gatherings receives a monetary fine.
- The host is the person who controls the premises where the gathering occurs and who aids, conducts, allows or supervises the gathering.
- A civil social host ordinance involves monetary fines and civil cost recovery, not criminal charges.

Why does Fortuna need this law?

According to California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data from Humboldt County (2019-2021) and Fortuna Union High School District (FUHSD) (2022-2023):

- Alcohol is the leading drug used on a regular basis by teens in Humboldt County.
- 13% of 11th grade students and 25% of 12th grade students in Fortuna report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- More than 10% of Fortuna Seniors report they are currently binge-drinking alcohol.
- 13% of Freshman students in FUHSD report that alcohol is “very easy to get.” By Senior year, 1/3 of students report that alcohol is “very easy to get.”

What is the penalty for violating the City of Fortuna's social host ordinance?

- An underage drinking party is considered a gathering if there are "2 or more persons" present.
- Gatherings can be at private residences or rural properties as well as public events at an "assembly hall or meeting room."
- Law enforcement can immediately issue a citation: the ordinance does not require a first warning.
- The fee structure for civil fines is as follows: \$500 (first violation); \$750 (second violation); and \$1,000 (third and each subsequent violation).
- Adult hosts may be held responsible for payment of city costs associated with providing police or other public services. These are also called response costs.
- Parents or guardians will be liable for fines or response costs if their underage child hosts the gathering.
- Criminal liability laws may apply in cases where injury occurs.

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 commercial tobacco, alcohol and other drug-related harm.
- To learn more, email publichealthaod@co.humboldt.ca.us or call 707-441-5569.