

# On the RAYSAC Radar

## **Social Hosting** **Parental Responsibility and Virginia Law**

Some parents feel it is their right, or responsibility to provide alcohol to minors in the comfort of their own homes. Social hosting refers to adults who **knowingly or unknowingly** host underage drinking parties on property they own, lease or otherwise control.

Teen parties are the primary setting for underage drinking in high school, and college. And, unlike adults who may drink when socializing, or on a special occasion, teens drink to get drunk. The most common setting for underage drinking parties is at someone's home.

Parents need to know that **social hosting is illegal**. Parents may be held responsible if someone as a result of alcohol use; gets into a fight and hurts someone, falls and hurts themselves or someone else, sexually assaults someone, damages property, dies from drinking too much, or injures or kills someone while driving after leaving the party.

Parents have a **civil liability** to pay damages if either a partygoer or a third person is injured. Virginia law recognizes liability for negligence if someone provides alcohol to a minor who causes injury to another, or to him or herself. Individuals may also face **criminal charges** of contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

***Purchasing, aiding and abetting or giving alcohol to minors is against the law.*** It is against state law to allow underage persons to possess or consume alcohol. This is a Class 1 misdemeanor and is punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine.

Parents need to understand the severity of hosting underage drinking parties. There can be no worse consequence to a parent's participation in underage drinking than a tragedy. Parents have to realize that young people who are drinking may well be getting behind the wheel of a car.

Source: Governors Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (GOSAP)  
*A Parent Guide to Preventing Underage Drinking*



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition  
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley