



STOP UNDERAGE DRINKING PARTIES IN CONNECTICUT

THE LOOPHOLE IN CONNECTICUT STATE LAW

Present Connecticut law allows anyone to host an underage drinking party in their house or on their property. Also, Connecticut law prohibits minors from possessing alcohol in public places, but does not prohibit them from possessing alcohol on private property.

THE FACTS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

- Underage drinking in Connecticut is 28% higher than the national average.
- In Connecticut, the average age a child begins drinking is 11 years old. National studies show that kids who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after 21 – the legal age.
- Connecticut ranks 15th highest in the nation for the rate of underage binge drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks at one occasion).
- In 2001, 36 Connecticut minors died due to alcohol exposure.
- Underage drinking cost Connecticut taxpayers \$600 Million in 2001, according to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

THE FACTS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING AT HOUSE PARTIES

What is it? An underage drinking “house party” is a gathering of two or more people in a home or on private property (field, backyard) where youth under 21 years of age possess and consume alcohol.

- 61% of Connecticut youth report in surveys they drink at “house parties.”
- 77% of high school students report obtaining alcohol at home, with or without parental permission.
- Binge drinking commonly occurs because alcohol is freely available.
- Common serious results are: alcohol poisonings, traffic crashes, property damage, community disturbance, violence, and sexual assault.

(OVER)

A FINAL FACT

Connecticut police often are called to house parties about fights, sexual assaults, vandalism, property damage and noise. When police respond, they cannot address the real problem -- underage drinking -- as existing state law allows minors to possess alcohol on private property. And, in most instances, an adult who condones such drinking is not held accountable. Kids get a mixed message. About 25% of Connecticut towns address the loophole through ordinances against house parties, but this patchwork of rules is ineffective because it simply sends the problem from one town to the next.

CLOSING THE LOOPHOLE...

- Reduces youth access to alcohol.
- Encourages parents and young adults to do the right thing by not providing *unsafe* environments that foster high risk, destructive behaviors.
- Prevents binge drinking, the riskiest and most common form of drinking among young people.
- Reassures parents that their children would not be allowed to drink alcohol when their child goes to someone else's home.
- Provides immediate, reasonable consequences to young people before tragedy occurs.
- Holds teens and adult "hosts" responsible for underage drinking.
- Provides a clear and consistent message both to teens and adults that underage drinking is unhealthy, unsafe and unacceptable -- no matter where it occurs.



The Connecticut Coalition to Stop Underage Drinking (CCSUD) is a grassroots network of more than 700 public and private sector organizations, communities, and individuals working to reduce underage drinking. We do this by acting to change public policies and create an environment in our communities that will not tolerate underage drinking.