

ALCOHOL FACTS



Adult Accountability

Responsibility for underage drinking is not limited to America's youth. Adults who provide alcohol to youth play a large part in the problem. Effective solutions include a community-based approach which holds adults accountable for their actions.

Problem: Many adults condone underage drinking, making it easy for minors to obtain alcohol through social connections such as parents, older siblings, friends, and friends' parents.

- One in four parents think that teens should be allowed to drink at home with their parents present.¹
- Nineteen percent of adults and 16 percent of parents with children aged 12-20 agree that underage drinking is a rite of passage.²
- Adults are the most common source of alcohol for 13-18 year olds.³
- Sixty-five percent of teens say it is easy to obtain alcohol from adult relatives or siblings.⁴
- One in three teens report obtaining alcohol from their own parents knowingly, and 40 percent have been served alcohol by a friend's parent.⁵
- Forty-six percent of youth who attempt to purchase alcohol employ the "shoulder tap" method by loitering outside of a store and soliciting adults to purchase alcohol for them.⁶
- In Marin County, California, 40 percent of youth reported that most often, community members purchase alcohol for young people.⁷

Solution: Communities can provide deterrents and change norms by enacting policies that hold adults accountable for their role in underage drinking.

- Social host laws impose penalties on adults who provide alcohol to a person under the age of 21 or allow for the adult to be held liable for any injuries and damages that occur as a result of underage drinking.⁸
- Ohio's "Parents Who Host, Lose The Most" campaign to increase awareness of social host laws resulted in a 26 percent decrease in the number of youth who say they had attended a party in the prior two months where alcohol was served to youth.⁹
- Shoulder tapping can be effectively combated and reduced through enforcement programs using underage decoys.¹⁰
- Keg registration statutes require that kegs of beer be formally registered and tagged at purchase so that law enforcement officers who confiscate the beer from underage drinkers can track the keg back to the original buyer.¹¹
- These policies that hold adults accountable enjoy strong public support: 71 percent of adults favor beer keg registration and 72 percent support penalties on parents who provide alcohol to minors.¹²



1. American Medical Association. "Teenage Drinking: Key Findings." (2005).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Gould-Lopez, M. (2001) "California Beverage Merchants." California Beverage News 65(2), 9.
7. Youth Leadership Institute. "Findings on Youth Access to Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs in Marin County." (2003) www.yli.org/prevention/files/YHACSurveyResults.pdf
8. The Marin Institute. "Policies to Combat Underage Drinking Parties." www.MarinInstitute.org/alcohol_policy/socialhost_teenparties.htm
9. Ohio Parents for Drug Free Youth. Parents Who Host, Lose The Most. (2005).
10. California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. Shoulder Tap Program. (2003) www.abc.ca.gov/programs/Shoulder_tap.html
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12. Richter, Linda, Roger Vaughan and Susan Foster. (2004) "Public Attitudes About Underage Drinking Policies: Results from a National Survey," Journal of Public Health Policy 25(1), 58-77.