

A Review of Social Host Policies Focused on Underage Drinking Parties: Suggestions for Future Research

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Abstract:

Underage drinking continues to be a public health concern, partially due to the ease in which adolescents obtain alcohol and consume it in private locations. States and municipalities have implemented strategies to counteract this, including adopting public policies called social host policies, despite limited evidence of effectiveness. Traditionally, these laws have held adults accountable for furnishing alcohol to underage drinkers. However, states and communities are using another policy, also called social host, to deter underage drinking parties where easy access to alcohol and high-risk use occurs. These innovative laws hold individuals who control the property accountable for underage drinking that occurs there, regardless of alcohol source. We conducted a critical analysis of social host policies focused on hosting underage drinking parties and constructed a conceptual model to understand their targeted factors. Future research recommendations are discussed.

Keywords: underage drinking | public health | public policies | social host laws | alcohol

Article:

INTRODUCTION

Despite years of underage drinking prevention programs and laws in all 50 states restricting alcohol use by those under 21, alcohol is the most heavily abused substance by adolescents in the United States (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2009). It is the nation's number one drug problem among youth and is associated with the three leading causes of death among teens: unintentional injuries, homicides, and suicides (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2006). The Surgeon General estimates that approximately 5,000 underage deaths are due to injuries experienced as the result of underage drinking each year (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2007).

There have been major public health advances, such as raising the drinking age from 18 to 21. However, underage alcohol use continues to generate attention from federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS), and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). These agencies, along with many other national, state, and local organizations, have made reducing underage drinking a high priority, as evidenced by their publications that call for collaborative approaches to establish comprehensive plans to reduce drinking among adolescents and associated alcohol-related consequences (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2004; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2000, 2007).

Communities concerned about underage alcohol use are recognizing that individual behavior is connected to a larger social environment that promotes, and often facilitates, underage alcohol use. They are addressing the larger environment by implementing strategies to change local conditions which contribute to underage alcohol use. A key strategy that can influence the social environment and change cultural norms around underage drinking is the modification of public and institutional policies that target availability of alcohol, how it is marketed, and where it can be consumed (Marin Institute, 2006).

One such public policy is social host laws. These laws hold servers and other adults accountable for furnishing alcohol to underage drinkers for harm inflicted to themselves and others as a result of their drinking (Marin Institute, 2006; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2011). While this is the traditional meaning of social host laws, a new wave of policies, also referred to as social host, go beyond furnishing alcohol to minors, and have become increasingly popular among states and local communities. These innovative laws hold those who have dominion over a property, such as property owners, renters, and even children of the property owners, accountable for underage drinking parties that occur on their property, regardless of alcohol source or if anyone was injured (Marin Institute, 2006). The purpose of these laws is to deter underage drinking parties where easy access to alcohol and high-risk use occurs (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2012).

The purpose of this article is to provide a critical analysis of the published research on social host laws that states and communities are using to address alcohol availability and underage drinking in residential settings. Because these laws are designed to deter social availability of alcohol and

change the drinking context, the article will begin with an overview of alcohol source and the social drinking context among adolescents.

Alcohol Source

Since experimentation with alcohol begins at an early age and consequences of use can be severe, youth access to alcohol must be addressed proactively. Much of the effort in the past 2 decades to reduce youth access has focused on commercial establishments, such as bars, grocery stores, and liquor stores primarily due to weak enforcement of the Minimum Drinking Age Law (Toomey, Lenk, & Wagenaar, 2007; Wagenaar & Wolfson, 1995). The limited enforcement conducted was not directed at the adult provider, but instead on the underage youth, resulting in a system where youth could easily access alcohol. Depending on location, purchase surveys show between 30-90% of commercial establishments sell to youth or those who appeared to be under 21 (Forster, McGovern, Wagenaar, Wolfson, Perry, & Anstine, 1994; Forster, Murray, Wolfson, & Wagenaar, 1995; Preusser & Williams, 1992; Wagenaar, 1993; Wolfson, Song, Martin, Wagoner, Miller, Pleasants, et al., 2006).

Communities attempt to reduce commercial availability to youth by limiting how, where, and when alcohol is sold through enforcement activities and public policies that restrict the density of alcohol outlets, limit days of alcohol sales, require implementation of server training and licensing, and hold licensed establishments accountable for harm inflicted by their patrons through server liability laws (Toomey, Wagenaar, Kilian, Fitch, Rothstein, & Fletcher, 1999). While these efforts are needed to prevent commercial access to alcohol, they do little to address social alcohol sources of underage drinkers. Studies consistently report that youth primarily obtain alcohol through social sources, including peers, parents, and other adults (Dent, Grube, & Biglan, 2005; Harrison, Fulkerson, & Park, 2000; Hearst, Fulkerson, Maldonado-Molina, Perry, & Komro, 2007; Smart, Adlaf, & Walsh, 1996; Wagenaar, Toomey, Murray, Short, Wolfson, & Jones-Webb, 1996). One study found that four out of five underage alcohol users, regardless of age, obtain alcohol exclusively from social sources (Harrison et al., 2000). A study conducted by the American Medical Association (2005) of youth ages 13 to 18 found that one-third reported being able to easily obtain alcohol from their consenting parents. Among those who obtained alcohol in the past 6 months, parents supplied alcohol an average of three times. Studies have investigated parental motivations for providing alcohol to adolescents and found that it is primarily to minimize short-term risks, such as binge drinking and drinking and driving. Of less concern are the long-term risks, such as future alcohol dependence (Graham, Ward, Munro, Snow, & Ellis, 2006).

Studies have also investigated the relationship between adult's approval of alcohol use and youth drinking behavior. Foley and colleagues (2004), found that the two were highly correlated, with youth who obtained alcohol from parents or adult relatives reported fewer drinks on the last drinking occasion compared to youth who obtained from underage friends or commercial sources. However, adolescents who obtained alcohol at a party from a parent, either their own or a friend's, reported consuming more drinks and were twice as likely to report past 30-day alcohol use and binge drinking.

While parents and other adults supply alcohol to underage drinkers, parties are another noteworthy source. Parties are typically held in private settings, such as someone's home, which have been reported to be the most common location for 9th-12th graders to consume alcohol (CDC, 2009; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2008). Parties are usually unsupervised, provide easy access to alcohol and involve large groups (JonesWebb, Toomey, Miner, Wagenaar, Wolfson, & Poon, 1997; Wagenaar et al., 1993). Power and colleagues (2005) examined drinking patterns of a cohort of 9th through 12th graders and found that drinking at parties increased from 7% to 22%, highlighting the progression from light drinking to more moderate drinking among high school students. This finding is echoed in a study examining adolescent alcohol source, where 32% of 6th graders, 56% of 9th graders, and 60% of 12th graders reported obtaining alcohol at a party (Harrison et al., 2000). Parties are associated with increased alcohol-related problems such as sexual assaults, drinking and driving, and violence. The size of the party, the number of people drinking at the party, and the presence of high-risk drinking activities are all important factors associated with not only obtaining alcohol, but also the amount of alcohol consumed and alcohol-related consequences (Clapp, Reed, Holmes, Lange, & Voas, 2006; Connolly, Casswell, Stewart, & Silva, 1992; Demers, Kairouz, Adlaf, Gliksman, NewtonTaylor, & Marchand, 2002; Harford & Spiegler, 1983; Harford, Wechsler, & Seibring, 2002; Kenney, Hummer, & Labrie, 2010; Paschall & Saltz, 2007; Singler, 1993).

In an effort to detect and shut down underage drinking parties, law enforcement implement party patrols (Stewart, 1999). Although enforcement can cite underage drinkers at the party, as well as the alcohol provider, it is often difficult to locate or pinpoint the provider (Applied Research Community Health and Safety Institute, 2009). This has led some states and communities to pass social host laws focused on underage drinking parties, removing the burden of identifying alcohol providers and allowing law enforcement to hold the owner or controller of the property accountable for allowing underage drinking to occur.

Social Drinking Context

While the role of drinking context has been well documented in the literature for college students and adults, fewer studies have been conducted on adolescents (Clapp et al., 2006; Demers et al., 2002; Single, 1993). In a study of 15-year-old New Zealand adolescents, situational variables, such as drinking outside of the home and drinking with peers, were associated with increased alcohol consumption (Connolly et al., 1992). In a U.S. sample of junior and high school students, youth drank more when the drinking location was outside their home and with less adult supervision. Additionally, the heaviest consumption occurred when adolescents were in peer-only drinking situations (Harford & Spiegler, 1983).

Focus groups have revealed that large underage drinking parties provide a unique context where young drinkers are introduced to heavy drinking by older, more experienced drinkers (Wagenaar et al., 1996). For example, in a study of high school students, those who consumed five or more drinks on the last drinking occasion more likely to report being in a large group of 11 or more (Mayer, Forster, Murray, & Wagenaar, 1998). Kenney and colleagues (2010) examined high-risk drinking contexts during high school, such as drinking before going out with friends and playing drinking games, and their association with high-risk drinking during the first year of college, and

found a high prevalence among high school students (45%). Moreover, students who participated in these high-risk activities drank significantly more than those who did not.

Evidence also suggests that drinking location may influence potential risk reduction behaviors. For example, one study reported that college freshmen were more likely to stop friends from driving after drinking when the drinking occurred in a public location, such as a bar or party, compared to residential locations (Collins & Frey, 1992), suggesting situational norms differ depending on the drinking location. Drinking behavior and alcohol-related consequences may also vary by drinking location due to variation in the strength of informal social control, differential regulation imposed by policies in various settings, varying enforcement of existing laws by local law enforcement, and knowledge of existing policies and associated penalties.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the critical analysis of the literature, a conceptual model was constructed to highlight the targets of social host policies in the larger context of adolescent alcohol use (Figure 1). The key factors targeted by the policies include *Alcohol Source* and *Social Context for Drinking*. These factors are presented in the larger context of adolescent alcohol use to conceptually demonstrate how they can influence *Adolescent Drinking*.

As Figure 1 shows, there are a number of intrapersonal factors, such as age, gender, and race, as well as interpersonal factors, such as parental approval of alcohol use and peer influence, that are associated with alcohol use (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). These factors are also associated with the source of alcohol for underage drinkers and with the social context for drinking, including drinking location and characteristics of the drinking context. For example, younger adolescents are more likely to obtain alcohol from social sources, and thus drink in private settings, as compared to older adolescents who may try to purchase alcohol from a commercial source. *Intrapersonal* and *Interpersonal* factors are also associated with adolescent drinking outcomes, which has been well-documented in the literature (Collins & Frey, 1992; Dennis, Cox, Black, & Muller, 2009; Fang, Schinke, & Cole, 2009; Foley et al., 2004).

The second key factor included in the model is *Alcohol Source*. Alcohol is obtained from one of two major sources: commercial establishments or social providers. Commercial establishments include bars, restaurants, and grocery stores that are licensed to sell alcohol. Social sources of alcohol, as described earlier, include parents, peers, and strangers that provide alcohol to underage youth. The source of alcohol is related to drinking location, because alcohol availability often influences where adolescents drink. For example, if a local restaurant will serve alcohol to underage drinkers, some adolescents are likely to drink at the restaurant. If parents provide alcohol and a location for their underage children and peers to drink, then adolescents are likely to drink in that private residence.

In this model, *Drinking Location*, one of the two components of the factor *Social Context of Drinking* is a direct target of social host policies. It is hypothesized that drinking location influences the context characteristics of a drinking episode. For example, if a youth purchases alcohol from a restaurant, he is less likely to be drinking in a large group and to play drinking

games while in the commercial establishment. However, if a youth obtains alcohol while at a party in a private residence, he is more likely to be with many other underage drinkers and participate in high-risk drinking activities. The other component of *Social Context of Drinking* is *Context Characteristics*, which is separated into three parts: high-risk activities, number of people with, and the number of people drinking who are under the age of 21. These have all been shown to be associated with increased drinking in adolescents.

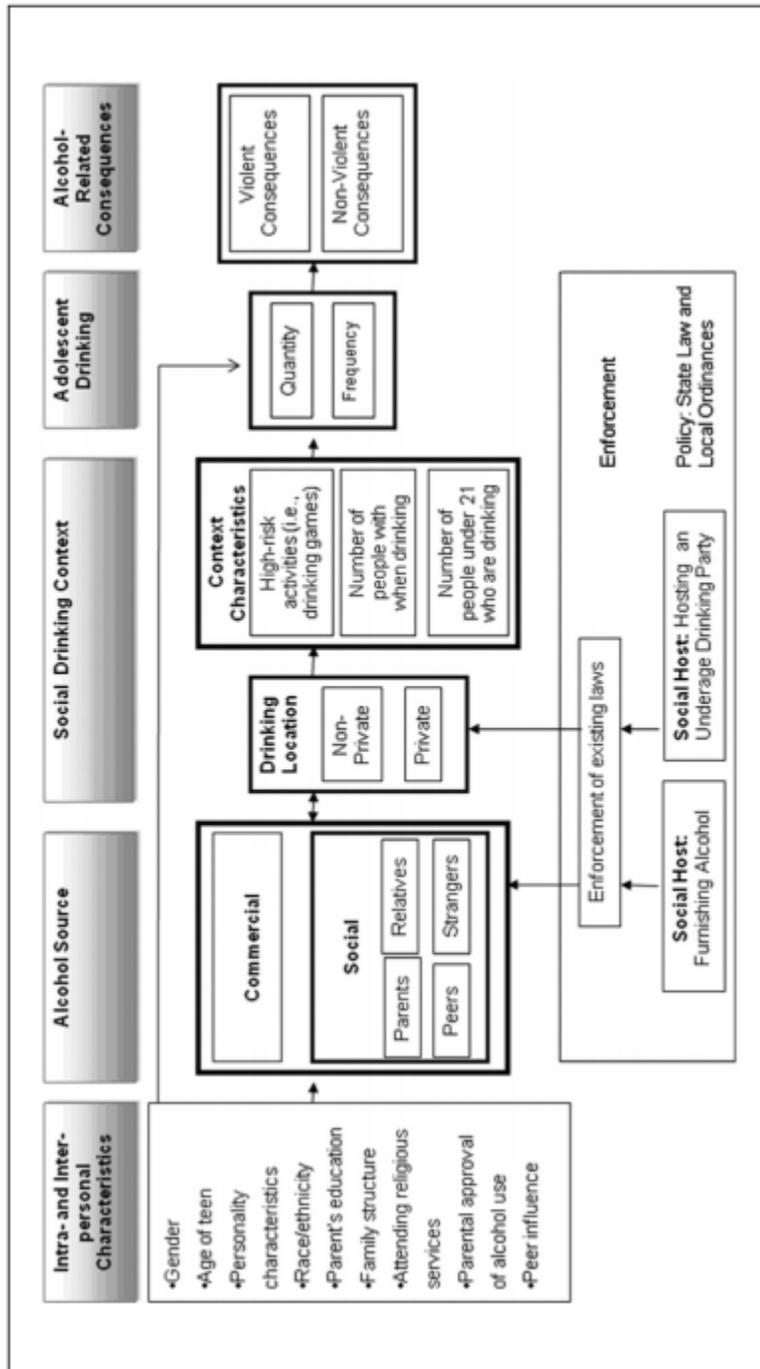


Figure 1. Conceptual model: Social hosts policy influence on alcohol source, social drinking context, and drinking outcomes among adolescents.

The final components of the model are *Adolescent Drinking* and *Alcohol Related Consequences*. Adolescent drinking is defined as quantity of alcohol consumed and frequency of alcohol consumption. These are associated with intra- and inter-personal factors, as well as the social drinking context. It is well established in the literature that adolescent alcohol use, especially high-risk use such as binge drinking, is associated with a multitude of consequences such as unintentional injuries, violence, sexual assault, and drinking and driving (Arata, Stafford, & Tims, 2003; Chatterji, Dave, Kaestner, & Markowitz, 2004; Hingson, Assailly, & Williams, 2004; Miller, Naimi, Brewer, & Jones, 2007). Efforts to decrease use thereby indirectly affect the severity and frequency of alcohol-related consequences.

State laws and local ordinances are examples of efforts that attempt to decrease underage drinking by changing social norms and increasing enforcement operations. State laws and local ordinances are one type of intervention to reduce underage alcohol use by targeting alcohol source and drinking location. While there are many interventions that have a similar goal (i.e., reducing underage alcohol use), such as individually-focused (e.g., educationally-focused, brief motivational interviewing), family-centered (Thatcher & Clark, 2006), and environmental strategies (e.g., social norms campaigns, increased law enforcement efforts) (Dent et al., 2005), this model focuses on policy change, and specifically social host laws.

To achieve their potential, policies must be implemented and enforced by law enforcement on a regular basis to have a deterrent effect (Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 2006). Therefore, the policies must be enforceable and law enforcement must routinely implement them in order to achieve the desired effect on deterring alcohol use, decreasing availability, and changing the social norms of the community.

Social host policies attempt to reduce underage drinking by controlling alcohol availability and the social context for drinking, which have been shown to be related to high-risk alcohol use. The policies target those who:

1. furnish alcohol to underage drinkers; and
2. host underage drinking gatherings.

Since the furnishing laws are targeting providers of alcohol, they, in theory, reduce the source of alcohol for underage drinkers. Laws and ordinances that hold the host accountable for actions that occur on property they control are attempting to decrease underage drinking by targeting the setting. Therefore, these laws, when enforced, can stop underage drinking from occurring at private locations, which have shown to be associated with high-risk drinking and large underage drinking parties.

In addition to serving as a guide for future research initiatives, the model shows how public policy, specifically social host policies, can decrease underage drinking by targeting alcohol source and drinking location through increased enforcement operations.

Alcohol Policy as a Strategy

Alcohol policies have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a set of measures that control the supply of alcohol to promote public health while minimizing alcohol-related harm (WHO, 2004). Their main purpose is to influence health and social determinants, such as drinking context and alcohol availability (Babor, Caetano, Casswell, Edwards, Giesbrecht, Graham, et al., 2003) and can be effective tools to modify social and cultural norms around alcohol. They have the potential to achieve long-term changes in underage alcohol use.

Social host liability is one type of policy that states have used to restrict alcohol availability. Social host laws can hold non-commercial providers of alcohol responsible for furnishing alcohol to underage persons or obviously intoxicated adults. In addition, social host laws can focus on underage drinking parties, holding property owners, or any person who controls the property, liable for underage drinking that occurs on the property.

Social Host Liability Focused on Furnishing Alcohol

Social host liability, in the broadest sense, is the legal term which holds adults accountable for irresponsible serving to an underage person or obviously intoxicated individuals that causes damages, injury, or death to a third-party (University of Minnesota, 2009). There are two distinct types of hosting liability against an individual under social host:

1. civil or tort liability; and
2. criminal liability (Center for the Study of Law and Enforcement Policy, 2005).

The first, tort liability, allows individuals to bring lawsuits against alcohol providers for damages and injuries sustained or caused by the underage drinker or obviously intoxicated adult (Grube & Nygaard, 2005). Tort liability can take two forms:

1. dram shop liability, in which commercial servers and alcohol establishments are held responsible; or
2. social host tort liability, which holds non-commercial providers accountable.

As of 2011, 43 states have statutory or case laws for dram shop liability and 33 states have social host tort liability (Mosher, 2011; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2012; NHTSA, 2007; Rammohan et al., 2011).

The second type is social host criminal liability which imposes penalties on anyone who serves alcohol to underage persons. Most state social host laws have criminal penalties, which can include imprisonment or fines. Communities may also pass social host ordinances that include criminal penalties. These penalties can be in the form of a criminal misdemeanor, which may include jail time, or a criminal infraction, which imposes a monetary fine (Babor et al., 2003; University of Minnesota, 2009).

Social Host Liability: Hosting Underage Parties

Social host liability is intended to prevent alcohol-related tragedies, such as drinking and driving crashes, by controlling the availability of alcohol through commercial and social sources. While

these laws have traditionally focused on the serving of alcohol, states and communities are moving to close loopholes in the laws by also applying liability to those who allow underage drinking on property they own or lease (Babor et al., 2003). The primary purpose of social host laws focused on hosting underage drinking parties is to deter parties, because these settings are associated with increased risk of binge-drinking and alcohol-related consequences (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2004). The laws prohibit gatherings where underage drinking and disorderly behavior occurs, giving law enforcement a tool to hold individuals accountable for allowing underage drinking parties and gatherings in residential settings or other private property. Social hosts include the property owner and any other person responsible for the setting, including youth, parents, tenants, or landlords. In most cases, the responsible party of the property does not have to be present to incur a penalty.

Social host laws focused on hosting underage drinking parties can have similar penalties as the social host furnishing laws described earlier. They also are often tied to the furnishing laws. Social host laws focused on hosting parties may impose other types of liability at the local level, including city/county criminal sanctions, civil and administrative penalties, and response cost recovery fees. Under city/county criminal sanctions, social hosts can be charged with a misdemeanor and face jail time, or an infraction, which carries a monetary fine. Under city/county civil and administrative penalties, as well as civil response cost recovery, the underage drinking party is considered a public nuisance and, thus, a threat to public safety. Social hosts are not criminally liable, but can be responsible for fines and the cost of police or other emergency service response to the property.

As of January 1, 2011, 27 states have enacted social hosting laws (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2012). Of those, eight states specifically address gatherings and parties on private property by underage youth (Babor et al., 2003; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2012). Statutes can also be in the form of *General Laws* or statutes that address adults permitting underage drinking on their property. Nineteen states have these broader laws, which can prohibit underage drinking at parties, as well as in other social contexts (Center for the Study of Law and Enforcement Policy, 2005; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2012).

Because penalties associated with tort and criminal laws are severe, strong evidence is required to show the host provided alcohol to the underage person or that the host knew the underage person was consuming alcohol on the property and took no action to stop it. Anecdotal evidence suggests that enforcement of these laws is difficult because the burden of proof is high for law enforcement (Applied Research Community Health and Safety Institute, 2009). Therefore, communities are addressing hosting underage drinking parties at the local level, often with administrative penalties or response-cost recovery fines, as evidenced by the over 150 cities and counties in 21 states that have passed social host ordinances (Mothers Against Drunk Driving, 2009; NIAAA, 2012).

Table 1 provides a summary of the social host laws including:

1. states with social host liability laws for *furnishing* alcohol to an underage person;
2. states with criminal laws for *hosting* underage drinking parties; and

3. local communities that have implemented social host ordinances focused on the hosting of underage drinking parties.

Effectiveness of Social Host Policies

Despite the number of states and communities that have passed social host laws and ordinances, there are few published studies on their effectiveness. Practice is at the forefront of this issue. No published studies have evaluated social host laws for hosting underage drinking parties, underscoring the need for research. However, several studies have examined social host liability laws for those who furnish alcohol to intoxicated guests. Stout and colleagues (2000) examined the effects of state regulation on legal age individuals' decisions to engage in heavy episodic drinking and drinking and driving. Respondents living in states that recognized social host civil liability were significantly less likely to report heavy episodic drinking and drinking and driving compared to individuals living in states that did not have this law. This finding was supported by another study that found social host civil liability reduced the drunk-driving fatality rate for 18-20 year olds by 9% (Dills, 2010). Dram shop liability had no effect on heavy episodic drinking. However, it did significantly decrease the probability of drinking and driving, a finding similar to one reported by Chaloupka and colleagues (1993).

Another study examining associations between alcohol policies and motor vehicle fatality rates among 18-64 year olds found somewhat conflicting results (Whetten-Goldstein, Sloan, Stout, & Liang, 2000). Findings revealed that dram shop laws were associated with lower underage and adult motor vehicle fatality rates for total deaths and alcohol-related deaths. However, social host civil liability was not associated with lower adult or minor death rates, an interesting outcome given Stout's finding of social host's impact on reduced self-reported drinking and driving.

While these studies are important in establishing evidence for the effectiveness of social host liability for *providing* alcohol, more research is needed to assess the effects of social host on allowing underage drinking in residential settings. No studies have examined social host laws designed to alter the situational context and reduce large underage drinking parties by holding the party host accountable for actions on private property

Table 1. Social Host Laws, by State

	State Social Host civil liability: Serving a minor or intoxicated individual ^a	State Social Host criminal law: Hosting an underage drinking event ^b	City/County municipal ordinance: Hosting an underage drinking event
Alabama	X	X	
Alaska		X	
Arizona	X	X	
Arkansas		X	
California			X
Colorado	X		
Connecticut	X	X	X
Delaware			
District of Columbia	X		
Florida	X	X	
Georgia	X		
Hawaii	X	X	
Idaho	X		
Illinois		X	X
Indiana	X		
Iowa	X		X
Kansas		X	
Kentucky			X
Louisiana	X		
Maine	X	X	
Maryland		X	
Massachusetts	X	X	X
Michigan	X	X	X
Minnesota	X		X
Mississippi	X		
Missouri		X	X
Montana	X		X
Nebraska			

Table 1. (Cont'd.)

	State Social Host civil liability: Serving a minor or intoxicated individual ^a	State Social Host criminal law: Hosting an underage drinking event ^b	City/County municipal ordinance: Hosting an underage drinking event
Nevada			X
New Hampshire	X	X	X
New Jersey	X	X	X
New Mexico	X		
New York	X		X
North Carolina	X		
North Dakota	X		Under consideration in one county
Ohio	X	X	X
Oklahoma		X	X
Oregon	X	X	X
Pennsylvania	X	X	X
Rhode Island		X	
South Carolina	X	X	
South Dakota			
Tennessee	X	X	
Texas			X
Utah	X	X	State bill pending allowing local ordinances
Vermont	X		
Virginia			
Washington	X	X	X
West Virginia			
Wisconsin	X	X	
Wyoming	X	X	X
TOTAL	33	27	21

^aMosher, 2011; NIAAA, 2012.

^bNIAAA, 2012.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Because practice is ahead of research in this area, numerous opportunities exist for research. Studies are needed to evaluate social host laws focused on prohibiting underage drinking parties to determine if they create the intended behavior change: reducing the number of large underage drinking parties on private property. Randomized controlled community trials could provide an increased understanding of how communities implement the policy and how effective the policy is at reducing underage drinking parties. In addition, the policy's impact on individual behavior, such as youth alcohol consumption and parent hosting, could be assessed.

Studies are also needed to document public support for these policies. A recent nationwide telephone survey of adults examined opinions about dram shop and social host liability and found that approximately 72% of respondents supported imposing penalties on parents who provide alcohol to minors. Greater support (85%) was given for penalties for alcohol establishments that provided alcohol to minors (Richter, Vaughan, & Foster, 2004). However, social host laws focused on hosting underage drinking parties were not included in the survey. Additional research in this area could assist policymakers by documenting public support for the policy and its associated liability. More importantly, it could provide a gauge of the public's willingness to accept the policy and facilitate societal change for which the laws are designed.

While social host policies hold potential for being effective tools to reduce underage alcohol use, details in the policy wording can make a substantial difference in how the law is enforced. Therefore, research is needed to determine key, effective components of the policies. Observational studies are needed to develop measures of policy strength, similar to studies conducted in the fields of tobacco control and clean indoor air (Alciati, Frosh, Green, Brownson, Fisher, Hobart, et al., 1998; Chriqui, Frosh, Brownson, Shelton, Sciandra, Hobart, et al., 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

Alcohol use among adolescents remains a public health concern, with 75% reporting ever use (CDC, 2009). Adolescents report that it is easy to obtain alcohol, despite it being illegal for those under 21. Many states and communities have taken the lead on addressing the social provision of alcohol and the hosting of unsafe underage drinking parties through social host laws. Research is playing catch-up in documenting their effectiveness and value as a strategy against underage drinking. Researchers and communities should take this opportunity to work together to assess existing social host laws and determine which type of liability is associated with decreased availability, changes in location, and other situational context in which drinking occurs, consumption behaviors, and subsequent alcohol-related consequences.

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