

# DOÑA ANA COUNTY SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE TO REDUCE UNDERAGE DRINKING

## ISSUE BRIEF 2020

A **SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE** is a local law that holds adults accountable (usually through fines) for hosting underage drinking in their homes or on their property.

A **HOST** is anyone who provides the space for minors to drink alcohol.

### UNDERAGE DRINKING IN DOÑA ANA COUNTY



**84%** indicated they had consumed alcohol in a social setting, either at their own home or another person's home.

**13%**

of drinkers reported binge drinking.



**36%**

of drinkers reported that someone gave them alcohol.



**32%**

reported using alcohol in the last 30 days.

**23%**

of youth reported having their first alcoholic beverage before the age of 13.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### IS UNDERAGE DRINKING A HEALTH PROBLEM?

Underage drinking comes with high risk consequences including, but not limited to, unplanned sexual activity, sexual assault, fights, unintentional and intentional injuries, mental health issues and problems in school.

#### HOW DO SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCES WORK?

They focus on where the drinking takes place rather than on who provides the alcohol. Social host ordinances make it easier to intervene quickly and efficiently before a large party gets out-of-hand and results in criminal activity and sanctions. Much like laws regulating speed limits, Social Host Ordinances set a standard to which everyone is expected to adhere and keeps everyone safer.

#### DO SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCES WORK?

Over time, there are fewer police calls for service for home parties. In addition, a growing body of research suggests that social host ordinances reduce the number of large, underage drinking parties in homes.

#### ARE THERE MORE BENEFITS TO SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCES?

Communities see fewer DWI's and fewer costs to emergency medical services (EMS) and local law enforcement. Many social host ordinances include a recovery cost. The recovery cost saves the community money. This frees up tax money to be used on community advancement. A Social Host Ordinance promotes adult responsibility, provides an additional tool for law enforcement responding to unruly gatherings where underage drinking is occurring, and helps keep our youth safe and healthy.

## WHO SUPPORTS SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCES?

Social Host Ordinances are a growing best practice backed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. It is also supported by The Institute of Medicine, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, national and local substance abuse coalitions, many local public health professional, Sunland Park Police Department and Anthony Police Department.

Social Host Ordinances are currently adopted and being enforced in:  
Anthony, Hatch, Mesilla and Sunland Park.

**PARENTS** like Social Host Ordinances because most parents are not comfortable with other people deciding that their child can drink alcohol.

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS** like Social Host Ordinances because they help keep neighborhoods and youth safe.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS** like Social Host Ordinances because they provide an additional tool to hold adults responsible for allowing underage drinking.

### DOÑA ANA COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT OPINIONS

“We support the ordinance to deter underage drinking and hold adults accountable for providing alcohol to minors. It sends a message that we are taking action to protect our youth in our community.”

- Chief V. Lara, City of Anthony, NM  
Police Department (2019)

“I witnessed three girls suffer an accident while on surveillance; they had just left a house party. We, as law enforcement, can make a difference if cities have it. We are in it to save lives.”

- Chief J. Guerra, City of Sunland Park, NM  
Police Department (2019)

### DOÑA ANA COMMUNITY MEMBER OPINIONS ON ADOPTING A SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE

“Drugs and Alcohol are a big problem here. It starts with the parents but not all parents are willing to be strict. Giving the parents a fine will change their attitude.”

- Community Resident

“Parents need to be held accountable. There is no excuse for allowing underage drinking.”

- Community Resident

“Giving parents a fine will change their attitude.”

- Community Resident

**Shift** is an initiative of the  
Paso del Norte Health Foundation

**UP!** UNIFIED  
PREVENTION  
COALITION  
For Doña Ana County

**CHI**  
Center for Health Innovation

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#### References:

NM Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey 2017  
Paso Del Norte Health Foundation  
Shift + Las Cruces Community Conversations