The impact of hosting underage drinking events

Social Host Liability Laws

Summertime often sets the scene for celebrations, some of which include alcohol. It’s a good time to be aware of social host liability laws, which Mothers Against Drunk Driving describe as “laws that hold individuals responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease, or otherwise control.” Those responsible can be parents, landowners and tenants. MADD goes on to say that, “Unlike laws that prohibit furnishing alcohol to youth under 21, social host laws focus on preventing underage drinking on private property without regard to who furnishes the alcohol. Their focus is on the venues in which underage drinking takes place rather than on the furnishing of the alcohol.”

Social host liability can apply in situations when underage drinking occurs at your house, even if you aren’t home. If someone is injured at a party hosted at your home, these laws can kick in, too. Older siblings or relatives need to be aware of these dangers as well so they can make smart choices.

Unlawful social hosting is a crime in 24 states and can result in civil lawsuits against hosts in 33 states. Violations may result in civil or criminal fines, prison terms and monetary damage awards, depending on the jurisdiction.

So, during this time of life when your student is still living with you, either full or part time, keep social host liability issues in mind. Let your student know what the consequences to you could be, should he/she decide to host a party at your house while you are gone. And think carefully about allowing underage drinking at your home. The outcome could be dangerous — and potentially lead to legal troubles — for those involved.


Interesting Topics for Summer Conversation

Here are some questions to start a conversation with your student:

- What classes is he/she most looking forward to next term — and why
- How can his/her living space be rearranged to make it more fun and effective
- What thing(s) did he/she got involved in this year — and why
- What are his/her goals for next term, from applying for a campus job to an academic goal to trying out for a leadership position
- In what ways can you both be more environmentally conscious
- What classes would you like to take if you were in college — and why
- What faculty or staff member was he/she most inspired by — and why
- How are friends spending the summer
- What suggestions does he/she have for family or friends going to college
- What is he/she really looking forward to in the coming year
10 Ways to Make the Most of Orientation

When you have the opportunity to go through a parent orientation program, there are some key ways to make the most of this gateway experience:

- **Prepare Questions.** Think about what you really want to know, not just what you “should” find out. Interested in how students can apply their learning in practical settings? Ask about internships, jobs and co-op opportunities. Want to know whom your student can turn to if there are learning difficulties? Ask the question. Thinking ahead will help you determine what’s truly important to you and your student.

- **Don’t be Shy.** Sitting back and listening to presenters and panels makes good sense. However, if you have additional questions, don’t hesitate to ask. Whether it’s in a group setting or one-on-one after a presentation, your concerns deserve attention. And no question is a “dumb” one!

- **Listen and Take Notes.** Jot some notes as various presenters offer you information. That way, you can read through them when you get home and clear your head. It’s easy to say, “I’ll remember that point or that contact info,” yet the sheer volume of information you are offered during orientation makes remembering everything very difficult.

- **Get to Know Other Parents/Family Members.** Orientation is an excellent time to mix and mingle with others who are going through the same thing that you are: sending a student to college. Develop informal support structures and compare notes with other parents and family members.

- **Give Your Student Some Space.** This is the first campus experience as a matriculated student so it’s important that he/she learn to navigate alone. Your student needs space to meet people, to ask questions and to take charge of college life. Starting off with a dose of self-responsibility during orientation will set a positive tone for the rest of the time on campus.

- **Take Tours.** It may be hot and you may be tired. Yet nothing beats seeing something with your own eyes. So, consider taking tours that are offered. You’ll get to see academic buildings, residence halls, community spaces and much more. Then, when your student starts talking about these places during the semester, you’ll be able to accurately picture him/her in his/her surroundings.

- **Keep Yourself Healthy.** Orientation sessions often happen on some of the hottest days of the year. Drink water, stay cool and pace yourself.

- **Don’t Cause a Scene.** We all know how to handle concerns with care and dignity. Make that your mode of operation so that people will respond to you better and so that your student doesn’t have to be embarrassed.

- **Have Paperwork in Place.** Work with your student to make sure that you’re bringing all the required paperwork to campus for orientation. Go through a checklist ahead of time so that you both feel prepared to dive into orientation without worry!

Orientation can be an exciting time for both you and your student. Make the most of it!
Commuter Concerns. What meal plans are available for commuters? How can they get involved in campus life, even though they don’t live there? What is the parking situation like?

Residence Hall Life. What are students allowed to bring and what is against policy? Do the mattresses require extra-long sheets? What staff members are available in the halls?

Academics. What services are available to students with learning disabilities? How do professors’ office hours work? If a student is falling behind, what can he/she do?

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Determine what is important to YOU.

Summer Reads

- “The Last Lecture” by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow
  How would you document all you’ve learned and experienced in your lifetime if you found out you only had a limited amount of time to live?

- “Assassination Vacation” by Sarah Vowell
  History, humor and vacation all mixed in one, as you visit the sites associated with presidential assassinations.

- “Change of Heart” by Jodi Picoult
  Explore family dynamics ... and a difficult struggle involving redemption and coming to terms with the past.

- “The End of Nature” by Bill McKibben
  What is nature and how has humanity impacted its beauty and wonder?

- “The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream” by Barack Obama
  “Hard Call: The Art of Great Decisions” by John McCain and Mark Salter
  “A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton” by Carl Bernstein

Learn more about the 2008 presidential candidates so you can make an informed choice this fall. Consider reading any of these books this summer by yourself — or with friends or family for some interesting discussions.

Freshman Summer Reading Program

Niagara Reads

For the seventh year, Niagara University is sponsoring Niagara Reads, our freshman summer reading program. The Niagara Reads committee has selected “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien for our 2008 program. “The Things They Carried” is a compelling and very readable book, written in a series of stories. It emanates from the author’s experience as a soldier in the Vietnam War. O’Brien spares few details in describing the horrors of war and how they affect soldiers as well as civilians. At the same time, he humanizes his soldiers with intricate and telling details about their lives and their personalities. He explores the myriad emotions elicited by war, from loneliness to fear to rage. He intertwines stories about soldiers’ lives after the war, offering a window into how deeply war can affect people for years to come. For further information check out the Web site http://www.niagara.edu/care/nrmemo.htm.

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Five Ways to Connect with Your Student This Summer

Whether you’re in the same place or living apart, there are some simple ways to stay connected with your student:

1. Suggest that you both read the same book so you can discuss it.

2. Go to a movie that your student has seen so you can compare notes.

3. Meet halfway to spend some time together, whether it’s for lunch, a hike or a chat.

4. Swap photos of your individual summer adventures — a picture often speaks volumes!

5. Volunteer together for a worthy cause, whether it’s distributing water at a local 5K run or helping in a community garden.
Helping students maximize their earnings

Summer Savings

Many students will be working to make — and save — money this summer so they can use it to pay for school costs. The idea is to get ahead so that they have money for textbooks and tuition, living expenses and laundry. Yet the temptation to earn and spend during the summer months can be strong for some students, especially if they aren’t the wisest money managers.

Here are some strategies you can share with them to help them maximize their summer money:

- **Set a weekly budget and stick to it.** Take out only a certain amount from the bank and/or ATM at the same time each week. This ritual may help you better recognize when you’re going overboard and hitting the ATM — and going over budget — at other times throughout the week.
- **Don’t rely on plastic.** If you have a habit of putting things on your credit card, simplify for the summer.
- **Keep costs to a minimum.** Carpool to work to save on gas costs or take public transportation. Perhaps you can still go out to dinner with friends but cut out $2 by not ordering a beverage. Try thinking of other simple cost-cutting measures that can really add up!
- **Set a savings goal.** After the first month of summer, revisit your summer savings goal and see what kind of progress is being made. Are you on target? Behind? Ahead? Check in on your goal every other week or so. This will allow you to be completely conscious of your money — even that which is squirreled away in savings.

Students can have fun and save money too. It just takes some smart planning, creative thinking and a bit of discipline. You can help them get on a healthy financial path.

Cost-Cutting Ideas

Here are some simple, yet effective, ideas to share with your student:

- Skip the beverage, dessert and that shared appetizer to save money when having dinner with friends
- Go to the less-expensive matinee
- Check out the Friday paper for free or low-cost fun during the weekend (festivals, concerts in the park, etc.)
- When road tripping with friends, consider camping — it’s good fun and costs less than paying for a hotel room
- Volunteer at an event — chances are you can get in for free while also lending a hand!

Seasonal Student Issues

There’s a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here’s some things your student may be experiencing:

- Missing friends at school and feeling like it’ll be a long time until they see them again.
- Transitioning back to life at home after being away all year (for students who go away to school).
- Adjusting to a new routine.
- Working full time instead of going to school full time.
- Anxiety about academics —feeling like they have a lot of ground to make up if they did poorly last semester.
- Reestablishing relationships with siblings, parents and friends.
- Budgeting their money and saving for fall.