

New Hampshire's Party Host Liability Law

Most underage drinkers get their alcohol from adults. In 2004 the NH legislature passed a law ([RSA 644:18](#)) to hold “hosts” of parties responsible for the actions of underage participants. This law can be applied to any adult.

Under this law

Host means a person who:

- is at least 17 years old;
- owns, rents, or has control of the site;
- knows about the party; and
- knows that persons under the age of 21 have a plan to drink alcohol or use drugs;

Party means:

- five or more people under the age of 21 (not related to the host) are present; and
- at least one person under the age of 21 has an alcoholic drink or an illegal drug.

To stay safe under this law

People whose properties may be the site of underage drinking or drug parties should:

- tell local law enforcement officials as soon as possible;
- take action to prevent the party; and/or
- try to stop the party, if it has already started.

What can happen to “hosts”?

Under this law, a person who hosts a party where minors drink alcohol or use drugs may be charged with a misdemeanor, fined up to \$2,000 and spend a year in jail.

Exceptions

The provisions of this section shall not apply to:

- the use of alcoholic beverages at legally protected religious observances or activities, or
- those persons using a controlled drug under a physician’s care where the use of the drug is consistent with the directions of a physician.

Law enforcement in NH takes underage drinking seriously

Other Applicable Legislation (find it all at: www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/nhtoc.htm)

[Section 179:5](#) Prohibited Sales to those under 21

[Section 179:5-a](#) Sale of Kegs of Malt Beverages Require Identification of Buyer

[Section 179:10](#) Unlawful Possession and Intoxication by those under 21

You can be part of the solution

Call the NH Liquor Commission’s Bureau of Enforcement at **1-888-8-Over-21** (868-3721) to anonymously report underage alcohol violations such as sales to minors or upcoming parties. Partnering with law enforcement is a key strategy to reduce underage drinking in our communities.