



THE MARYLAND COLLABORATIVE

TO REDUCE COLLEGE DRINKING AND RELATED PROBLEMS

What is a social host law? What impact have they had locally in Maryland?

- A civil social host law allows law enforcement to write a civil citation – similar to a speeding ticket – to the host of a loud unruly party. Behaviors that can trigger a citation include underage drinking or excessive noise, large crowds blocking sidewalks or streets, public drunkenness, vandalism, littering, assaults, or other behavior threatening public health and safety.
- The current state law allows police to charge persons criminally for allowing anyone under 21 to consume alcohol in their home other than a member of their immediate family or as part of a religious service. Civil citations are not currently an option. Civil citations are less burdensome on the system, do not entail an arrest record, and allow for consequences that are swifter and more certain, and therefore more effective at deterring the problem behaviors.
- A civil social host law can mitigate creating criminal records for responsible parties who are cited under the ordinance.
- Social host ordinances levy a fine for a first offense (\$500) and fines increase in severity for subsequent offenses at the same location (\$1000). Violators can also be required to perform community service. A landlord can be cited for subsequent violations.
- Since 2015, five local jurisdictions – Baltimore City, College Park, Baltimore County (in effect in Towson and neighborhoods bordering UMBC), the City of Frostburg, and the town of Princess Anne – have adopted civil social host ordinances. These jurisdictions have seen
 - Reductions in calls for service related to large house parties.
 - Reductions in excessive drinking at house parties among college students
- Two jurisdictions saw a 70% drop in complaint calls for excessive noise.
- Nearby college campuses have seen a significant reduction in the number of students who report drinking at off-campus house parties and in the number of students who engage in binge drinking.
- In Maryland, approximately one in five Maryland college students meet the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse, and a third of our underage college drinkers report having driven with a drinking driver.
- Maryland college students who drank at an off-campus house party in the past month were three times more likely to injure someone, damage property, perform poorly on a test or project, or get in trouble with campus police, compared to those who did not. They were also twice as likely to miss class and get in trouble with off-campus police, and more than 1.5 times as likely to ride with a drinking driver, experience sexual misconduct, or have unprotected sex¹.
- The college presidents of the Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking support a statewide social host law.
- For more information, contact Molly Mitchell at mmitchell@jhu.edu

¹ Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems. High-risk drinking among college students in Maryland: Identifying targets for intervention; 2014.