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The Importance of the Social Host Law

Oklahoma's Social Host law means it's up to you, as parents, grandparents, and/or friends, to not allow kids to drink alcohol in your house *or* on your property. Some might think that they are keeping their kids safe by giving them an environment where they can drink alcohol and have a good time, and not drive afterward. But the reality of that situation is the *hosting party*, not realizing the properties of alcohol and how it actually affects individuals.

In 2011, advocates for the Social Host law, convinced lawmakers to further strengthen an existing law, by adding graduated penalties that would deter and prevent anyone from providing a location for individuals under 21 to drink alcoholic beverages. This became known as Oklahoma's Social Host law (oklahomasocialhost.com, 2011).

The penalties are stiff for offenders of the law. If people under 21 are gathered and drinking on private property, the person who provides the location is considered the Social Host, and will be held accountable. A "Social Host" can be a minor or adult and does not have to be physically present, nor do they have to be the actual property owner. Social Host violations carry a first-time fine of up to \$500. If someone is injured or killed because of a Social Host violation, they can be charged with a felony, punishable by up to 5 years in prison and a fine up to \$2,500. Fines increase for repeat offenders with additional violations — three strikes will get a *felony conviction* with up to 5 years in prison and a fine up to \$2,500 (oklahomasocialhost.com, 2011).

Let's all do our part to preventing underage drinking by remembering, *and practicing*, the slogan for the Oklahoma's Social Host law: **Oklahomans who host, stand to lose the most!**

For more information on the social host law please contact Michelle Bugg with Red Rock RPC at (405)-422-8873. The RPC's primary focus is to serve as a prevention community liaison. Red Rock RPC educates and informs communities through multiple strategies including community based services, environmental strategies, early recognition, and referral. The RPC takes a proactive approach in reducing substance abuse among communities. Red Rock RPC is funded through the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. For more information about the Regional Prevention Coordinator please visit www.redrockrpc.com or contact the Red Rock RPC at (405)-422-8873.