



Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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With support from the OJJDP Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Initiative, community organizations, enforcement agencies, youth, and other concerned citizens are working collaboratively to change local ordinances, State laws, and enforcement practices.

Social Host Law Passed in Hawaii

This past spring, Hawaii enacted a social host liability law for adults providing alcohol to minors under the age of 21, joining 31 other states that have already adopted similar laws. The new law resulted from the determined efforts of MADD-Hawaii's staff, volunteers, and members of the Hawaii Partnership to Prevent Underage Drinking representing all the Hawaiian Islands to substantiate the State of Hawaii's commitment to deter underage drinking and to assign responsibility to adults who promote this illegal behavior.

According to Donna Gutierrez, MADD-Hawaii, several legislators were willing to propose the bill in order to "send a wake-up call" to parents and adults who take lightly the dangers and risks teens pose to themselves and others when they drink, especially when they drink and drive.. Several recent crashes involving teens who had been drinking at parent-hosted parties highlighted the need for a law that would hold adults accountable when they buy or provide alcohol to minors.

Beginning in the fall of 2002, MADD-Hawaii and other organizations began to work with legislators to write a social host bill and to organize grassroots support for the law on each of the islands. When the legislative session began in 2003, MADD-Hawaii and Hawaii Partnership members hit the ground running. Using data from surveys that showed the majority of Hawaiian teens obtain their alcohol from adults, MADD-Hawaii's Youth in Action team implemented a public information campaign through the media and testified in committee hearings. During the process, they gathered support from key legislators, police officers, and county, and State officials including

Lieutenant Governor Duke Aiona. Several articles appeared in Honolulu's two daily newspapers.

Their efforts paid off; in April, both houses of the State legislature passed the bill. On May 20, 2003, Governor Linda Lingle signed the bill into law during a ceremony at a waterfront memorial for victims of drunk-driving crashes in Honolulu. The social host liability law was effective immediately.

The social host liability law establishes criminal penalties of up to one year in jail, fines of up to \$1000, or both, for adults who furnish alcoholic beverages to anyone younger than age 21. The previous law only prohibited adults from buying alcohol for minors. Under the new law, adults who "knowingly" provide liquor to someone younger than age 21 or have knowledge of underage drinking on their property and could have prevented it can be held financially responsible for any third party injury that may ensue from their provision.

**Our Point:
Communities, States, and law enforcement are successfully changing laws, regulations, and enforcement practices to reduce underage drinking.**

After working tirelessly to get the law passed, MADD-Hawaii and the Hawaii Partnership to Prevent Underage Drinking are embarking on the toughest part of their effort – educating the public. The message will be carried to all the islands through volunteers and the Hawaii Partnership to Prevent Underage Drinking County Coalitions. The strategy is to wage a media campaign through television, radio, and local newspapers. They also plan to pass out brochures and coordinate discussion sessions in schools. The resounding message from MADD-Hawaii is, "Providing alcohol to minors is a serious – and even deadly – practice. Parents and other adults need to know that now they can be held both criminally and civilly responsible. It's the law."

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