



Giving Teens Alcohol in Your Home Legal Liability for Parents and Homeowners

It is not uncommon in our area for parents to knowingly allow teens to drink alcohol in their homes. The justification for this poor decision is often stated as, "I'd rather have my kids and their friends drink at my house where I can keep an eye on what's going on." Some parents go to what they think are great lengths to "protect" the drinking teens by holding the car keys until the next day. This does not always keep them safe if they choose to leave in the middle of the night, or in the morning while still under the influence.

August 18, 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law AB 2486. The law makes clear that **any parent, guardian or other adult who knowingly serves or furnishes alcohol to persons under 21 at his or her home can be legally responsible for subsequent injuries or damages.**

What does this law mean to you? It means that if you knowingly serve or furnish any person under the age of 21 with alcohol at your home, you can be held financially responsible for any injuries or other damages the under-age drinker may cause while under the influence. For example, if the under-age drinker leaves your home and injures or kills someone while driving, you can be held financially responsible in a court of law. Death, serious injury and property damage resulting from car accidents may be the most likely situation, but there could also be financial responsibility arising out of under-age drinking in other situations, such as injuries from physical altercations, property damage from vandalism or physical or emotional injuries from unwanted or inappropriate sexual activity.

What can you do to avoid responsibility under this amended law? ***Do not furnish or otherwise make alcohol available in your home to persons under the age of 21.*** And to be safe, if you keep alcohol in your home, you should consider preventing access in some way so there is never any doubt that you have taken reasonable steps to prevent access to alcohol by persons under 21.