Legal Concerns in Washington

Hosting parties: As a host, you can be held liable—and can therefore be sued—for any injuries incurred during or after the party. Underage drinking and provision of alcohol to minors are illegal and can lead to a criminal citation. When kegs are purchased, the address of the party is registered, and law enforcement has access to this information.

Drinking and Driving: There is zero tolerance for underage driving under the influence. You can lose your driver’s license for a minimum of one year. A legal drinker’s BAC may be less than 0.08%, but an officer may still find him/her to be impaired and can issue a DUI. If you are under 21 and blow a .02% or higher, that is a DUI.

MIP: Even legal drinkers can receive a citation for drinking in public. Those under 21 can receive a Minor in Possession citation just for being around alcohol.

Noise: You can be cited for “the creations of frequent, repetitive or continuous sounds...which unreasonably interfere with the peace, comfort and repose of owners or possessors of real property, such as sounds from audio equipment, musical instruments, band sessions, or social gatherings” (Tacoma Municipal Code, 8.12.060.D).

Ending the Party...

When does the party end? What have you and your housemates decided beforehand? Who makes the call during the party?

Are you ready to wind down? Try these suggestions: Assign a door monitor to ensure new guests are turned away, turn on the lights, change the music, stop serving alcohol, and serve more coffee, soda, water and juices.

Encourage guests to leave in small groups. Large groups of more than 4 or 5 people can be noisy and tend to attract more attention moving through neighborhoods. Save yourself and your guests some hassle by asking them to travel in groups of 3 or 4 people.

Clean up what you can as soon as the party is over. It’s probably late, but try to make sure that your yard is free of trash; this will make your neighbors much happier in the morning. Have recycling containers set up near trash cans.

Continue offering sober drivers to guests. Be assertive and take away keys if a drunken guest wants to drive home. Remember your liability if a driver causes an accident after drinking at your party.

Offices and Resources

Community Engagements: 253-879-3530
Rachel Cardwell

Counseling, Health, and Wellness Services: 253-879-1555

Dean of Students: 253-879-3360
General Information

Greek Life: 253-879-3360
Moe Stephens

Off Campus Student Services: 253-879.3970

Security Services: 253-879-3311

For more information contact:
Chris Edwards, PsyD, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator
Counseling, Health and Wellness Services
(253) 879-2774
Alcohol Safety

Be a good spotter, and keep an eye on your friends. Also think about getting a hold of a sober person to help. Watch for the signs of intoxication:

- Swaying, stumbling, spilling drinks, or bumping into things
- Talking or laughing loudly, especially when things are not funny
- Exaggerating behaviors (i.e. good moods are better, bad moods are worse)
- Difficulty focusing & maintaining eye contact
- Acting aggressively or belligerently

Signs of Alcohol Poisoning:

- Passed out & cannot be woken
- Slow or irregular breathing
- Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
- Vomiting excessively or while passed out
- Irregular pulse – weak, rapid or slow

Call 911 or x3311 if any signs are present. Your first concern is your guest’s safety; emergency room staff are unlikely to call the police, because their primary concern is to save a life.

Planning the Party...

Decide as a group what type of party you want:

Open or closed party, what food and drinks to serve (make sure there are non-alcoholic beverages and water easily available), theme (i.e. Jungle, Casino, Beach, 80’s)

How will you pay for your party?

Charging guests at the door can cause legal and social problems.

Where will your guests fit?

How much room do you have? Are there any areas that are off-limits? Remember when a party moves outside, it draws more attention from neighbors and police.

Managing the Party

If alcohol is being served, encourage guests to eat food and drink non-alcoholic drinks (i.e. soda, punch, lemonade, water). Monitor your guests to make sure they’re not too drunk and/or headed for trouble.

Offer a sober driver to guests throughout the party. Or offer a cab company to take your guest safely home: (253) 942-8773 OR (253) 943-5555

Having a guest list will reduce the likelihood of party crashers. Also remember that if the only people drinking are of legal age you can call the police and they will take care of the crashers for you.

Exercise your prerogative to set guidelines about the use of illegal substances. How will you handle guests who bring drugs? Be aware of your liability even if your guests have used illicit drugs before the party.

If a guest is out of hand...

DO

- Be considerate
- Be assertive
- Offer nonalcoholic drinks
- Make sure others are around you to offer support

DON’T

- Act angry or back down
- Hesitate to call the police
- Touch the person with out a good reason