

## IT'S GRADUATION TIME!

### A SPECIAL REMINDER TO PARENTS HOSTING GRADUATION PARTIES

#### Parents: Don't Allow Underage Drinking at Your Home!

It's that time of year again --- Graduation Time! Unfortunately, graduation parties often include underage drinking --- which can, in turn, produce tragic events. The newspapers are littered with such stories this time of year --- DUIs involving high school seniors that result in injuries or death.

Parents, resist the temptation of being the "cool parent" by furnishing alcohol to your high school grad's party guests --- or by turning a "blind eye" to underage drinking (or smoking marijuana) at your home. If you serve alcohol to minors, or allow minors to drink at your home, you could be the subject of criminal prosecution.

RCW 66.44.270 states, in pertinent part:

*It is unlawful for any person to sell, give, or otherwise supply liquor to any person under the age of twenty-one years or permit any person under that age to consume liquor on his or her premises or on any premises under his or her control. For the purposes of this subsection, "premises" includes real property, houses, buildings, and other structures, and motor vehicles and watercraft.*

Note that the statute broadly defines "premises" ... so hosting a party on your sailboat does not relieve you from liability associated with underage drinking.

If prosecuted, you face criminal penalties which include a fine of up to \$5,000 and one year in jail.

Further, if you allow a teenager to drink at your home, and that teenager injures himself, whether from a DUI, a fall, or alcohol poisoning, you can be sued for negligence, and be held liable for damages from their injuries. See, *Hansen v. Friend*, 118 Wn.2d 476 (1992) (permitting a mother's wrongful death lawsuit against adult social hosts for negligently furnishing liquor to her 15-year old son, causing his intoxication and drowning).

In addition, although you may have homeowner's insurance, don't rely on it to protect you from any potential lawsuits involving underage drinking. Many policies specifically exclude coverage for unlawful acts; as policies differ, you should check with your insurance carrier to verify what coverage may be available to you in the event an injury occurs.

High School graduation is a milestone worthy of celebrating. But don't allow the celebrations to turn tragic by allowing underage drinking at your home. Be safe, and congratulations to your graduating senior!

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