

## What Are the Underage Drinking Laws in DC?<sup>1</sup>

Possession/ Consumption/ Purchase	It is illegal for persons under the age of 21 to possess, consume, purchase or attempt to purchase an alcoholic beverage. There are no family or location exceptions for possession or consumption. Violators can be fined \$300 to \$1,000 <u>and</u> will lose their driving privileges for 90 days to up to one year.
Fake ID	It is illegal for a person under the age of 21 to falsely represent their age or possess a fake ID for the purpose of purchasing, possessing, or drinking an alcoholic beverage.
Furnishing	It is illegal to sell to, purchase for, or in any other way deliver alcoholic beverages to a person under the age of 21.
Sell/Serve	Must be 18 years to sell and serve alcohol; 21 to bartend.
Keg Registration	Requires name, address, identification, and address where keg will be consumed.
Zero Tolerance Driving Law	Any person under the age of 21 operating a motor vehicle with any positive Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is considered to be driving the vehicle illegally.
Use/Lose Law	Any person under the age of 21 who violates possession, consumption, purchase, or fake ID laws will have their drivers' license suspended or revoked for 90 days to up to one year.

- DC currently has a comprehensive set of underage drinking laws in place. DC is one of only 15 states that has zero tolerance driving laws for underage drivers. The District is also one of only 15 states that has no family or location exceptions (e.g., parent/guardian consent; consumption in private home) to their law against underage possession of alcohol.
- There are only two underage drinking laws that DC does not currently have that other states have adopted—an internal possession law and state-imposed liability for hosts of underage parties (see box below).

### Enforcement is the Key

- Enforcement of underage drinking laws has been shown to not only affect drinking behaviors, but also perceived alcohol availability, perceived harm, and personal disapproval of use.<sup>2</sup>
- An Oregon study found that communities with higher enforcement of possession laws and with lower rates of illegal merchant sales to minors had lower rates of alcohol use and binge drinking among youths ages 16 and 17.<sup>3</sup>
- According to a New Hampshire study, quarterly compliance checks of alcohol retailers over a two-year period resulted in a 64% reduction in retail alcohol sales to youth, as well as a decrease in past month alcohol use and binge drinking among youth.<sup>4</sup>

### Other Underage Drinking Legislation<sup>1</sup>

- Eight states currently have internal possession laws that prohibit a person under the age of 21 from having alcohol in her or his system as determined by a blood, breath or urine test, regardless of whether there are other indicators of consumption.
- Underage drinking parties are high-risk settings for heavy drinking and/or binge drinking. Seven states currently have legislation imposing liability on persons who allow underage drinking to occur on property they own, lease, or control, regardless of whether they provided the alcohol.

<sup>1</sup> NIAAA, Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS), [www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov), accessed 9/22/2010; <sup>2</sup>Lipperman-Kreda, S.; Paschall, M.J., Grube, J.W. "Perceived Local Enforcement, Personal Beliefs, and Underage Drinking: An Assessment of Moderating and Main Effect," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 70(1):64-69, 2009; <sup>3</sup>Dent, C.W.; Grube, J.W., Biglan, A. "Community Level Alcohol Availability & Enforcement of Possession Laws as Predictors of Youth Drinking," *Preventive Medicine* 40(3): 355-362, 2005; <sup>4</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Enhanced Enforcement of Laws to Prevent Alcohol Sales to Underage Persons—New Hampshire, 1999-2004," *MMWR* 53(21):452-454, 2004.