

Cracking down: Youths protected by social host law

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When the police chief asks for a new law, it's best to listen. To their credit, that's exactly what members of the Oklahoma City Council did this week in enacting a social host ordinance to punish adults who host parties where minors are served alcohol.



That action put Oklahoma City on a growing list of cities and towns clamping down on adults who fail to act their age and put teenagers in danger. Good for them. Providing alcohol to minors isn't cool. It's illegal.

Police Chief Bill Citty said police will use the new law to help break up parties before they become a problem. And there's no denying underage drinking is a huge problem. While many teenagers are smart enough to make good decisions when it comes to drugs and alcohol, many aren't. The only person standing between those youth and tragedy is a responsible adult.

Edmond started the local social host ordinance trend in 2007, modeling its social host law after one in San Diego, and has since issued several dozen citations. Dozens of other cities have followed suit.

"I don't think there is a downside to it," Citty said recently. "It's kind of like a curfew ordinance. In many cases, there is no arrest made, but it is a huge deterrent if we can arrest you."

It's a shame it takes an ordinance for some adults to get the message. But used well, this law gives parents and law enforcement a powerful new tool to help keep youths safe.