CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on receiving off-campus status and welcome to the City of Oberlin Community! Your new place is sure to offer some great bonuses: you’ll get to cook your own food, inhabit your own personal space, and have the room and freedom to make the place really feel like home. With off-campus status comes independence and new responsibilities. At some point you may want to plan a party. It is up to you to regulate who and what come in and out of your new home. In addition, you no longer live on College property, so city and state law now apply in earnest and jurisdiction lies with the Oberlin Police Department. This document is intended to assist you in planning a fun event and learning about common pitfalls and how to avoid them or handle them when they occur.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

For EMERGENCIES, call: 911
OC Safety and Security: 440-775-8911
For Allen Medical Center Emergency Room call: 440-775-9110
For non-emergencies, call: College Security Dispatcher: 440-775-8444
For Student Shuttle (9 PM – 2 AM) call: 440-775-RIDE (7433)

Provide by:
The Center for Leadership in Health Promotion
440-775-5366
http://www.oberlin.edu/lifeskills

The Office of Residential Education
440-775-8472
http://www.oberlin.edu/resed

*This document was adapted with permission from UW-Madison
What exactly is a party?

A party refers to an event with a “packed house” as opposed to a gathering of a small group of friends. A party is a gathering of people that may include loud music, an abundance of alcohol, or a big mess at the end of the night.

The safest party is one with a guest list at the door. This ensures that you, as a host, know everyone present. As a result, there is no question about how many people will attend. By knowing everyone in attendance at your party, the risk of damage, theft, and loss of control is greatly minimized.

The use of a guest list will not guarantee that only invited guests will attend. Friends may tell friends about your party, information about the party is shared among students, and passers by may see a crowd walking to or gathered outside your home.

This booklet addresses parties, presenting common dangers and proven methods to prevent risks and ensure that everyone can have a fun, safe time.

ALCOHOL is a drug that impedes judgment and self-control. If misused, alcohol causes health problems and can be a burden on campus and city resources. Still, the campus community understands that many students choose to drink and that parties are a way to build community. We are committed to reducing alcohol-related problems by providing information and awareness about the consequences of parties with alcohol. Alcohol and other intoxicants severely impede judgment and blur boundaries for acceptable behavior.

Sober Host = Better Party:

As the host of a party, you are responsible for making sure that everyone in attendance remains safe. You can do this by being aware and responding to activity in your home. In order to avoid some of the pitfalls (e.g., property damage, theft, sexual assault) of a large party, it is very important for the host(s) and several friends to remain sober. This will allow for better judgment when it comes to noise and behavior control issues.

In order to avoid negative consequences, use these guidelines if you decide to drink, and help your guests use them too:

- **USE YOUR STOMACH**
  - Eat before and while you drink.
  - Choose drinks with water or juice mixers (calories slow down alcohol absorption) and low alcohol content. Carbonated beverages increase the rate of intoxication and should be avoided.

- **USE YOUR MOUTH**
  - Slow down your drinking rate to less than one per hour.
  - Sip; don’t gulp.
  - Alternate between alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.
  - Don’t quench your thirst with alcoholic drinks.

- **USE YOUR HEAD**
  - Plan how much you will drink beforehand
  - Decide beforehand not to drink more than you can handle.
  - Limit your drinks to no more than three or four per occasion.

For a brief summary of alcohol-related laws, check out: [http://oberlin.edu/lifeskills/aod/laws/state.html](http://oberlin.edu/lifeskills/aod/laws/state.html) or review the full law ORC4301. If a guest seems so intoxicated as they are leaving that they might not make it home, offer information about the Student Shuttle Service RIDELINE (775-RIDE).

**REDUCING RISKS**

Guest lists are great way to reduce risks. You may also want to consider stamping hands for friends over 21, limiting the number of guests, and preparing yourself with a script for asking unwelcome guests to leave (e.g., I’m sorry. This is a closed party.”). This will reduce problems with overcrowding, noise, and other disruptive behavior. You may also want to consider closing off access to basements and attics during your party.

**BANDS AND NOISE**

As a host, you may want to have a band at your party. Keep in mind that live music may make noise management a challenge. Do not cover windows or doors with mattresses, blankets, or other materials to drown out noise. This is a serious fire hazard and is seldom effective. If you do have a live band or DJ, try to keep noise levels appropriate to avoid public complaints. If you do receive a complaint, reduce your noise as quickly as possible and maintain a more appropriate volume level. If the band or DJ will be outdoors, you will need to secure a Special Assembly Permit from the city.

**PROPERTY DAMAGE AND THEFT**

Allowing strangers (e.g., friends of friends) or acquaintances into your home and letting them walk around unsupervised creates opportunities for items to be broken or stolen. The best way to prevent this is simply to prevent access to valuable items.

- Secure all bedrooms, pantries, and closets. Be sure that locks are secure enough not to get kicked in or broken. Secure cabinets, drawers, and refrigerators.
- Clear shelves and bulletin boards. Remove all towels, toiletries, and cleaning supplies from the bathroom that are not needed for hand washing.
- Cover or protect all items that can be tampered with. These include valves on the furnace, water heaters, radiators, and fuse boxes.
- DO NOT ALLOW SMOKING inside the house as this will drastically reduce the chance of a fire. Section off an outdoor area for smokers; most guests will be happy to step outside to smoke and cool off.
It is imperative that, as a host, you remain sober enough to keep an eye on the door and the events taking place outside. Check the locks periodically and watch out for people breaking or stealing items. It’s a good idea to ask friends to help you monitor your party.

REMEMBER: If items come up missing, there’s little that can be done and it’s unlikely that you’ll find who took them. If damage is done to the house, as the host, you are liable and may be billed when you terminate your lease.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Guests who have had too much to drink are generally not in a state of mind to obtain or grant consent for sex. If your guests’ behavior looks questionable, consider stepping in to make sure both parties are consenting and are sober enough to do so. Groping, harassing, or making any other unwanted sexual contact is always unacceptable.
- Talk to your guests and their companions as they come and go. Ask them if their friends know they are leaving and if they know the person/people with whom they are leaving. Watch for people lingering outside the party; when people are visibly drunk they become easier targets of crime.

FIGHTS

Use your best judgment to diffuse violence. If people are looking to fight, destroy property, or do something that could hurt other people, consider your options:
- Let other guests know to avoid the people looking to fight.
- Consider contacting the police to assist with diffusing the situation before things get out of hand and neighbors call the police for you.
- Enlist a group of friends to escort guests wishing to fight out of party and off the property. Watch entrances to ensure that these guests do not return.

PARTY GETS “BUSTED”

Even registered parties can get “busted” if things get out of hand. Below are some ways to maintain control at your party, to have the police involved in a positive way, and to react if your party gets “busted.”

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS I CAN AVOID HAVING THE POLICE “BUST” MY PARTY?

- Inform your neighbors when you are having a party. Giving neighbors a heads-up before the party shows respect and encourages neighbors to approach you with concerns instead of immediately calling the police.
- Take frequent walks around the outside of your house. You’ll find out if music is too loud, if people are too loud, or if there is a line to get in (this is a sure signal that your party is too big).
- Keep all of your guests in the backyard or back of the house. This will draw less attention to the party and discourage people from wandering around through neighbors’ yards.
- Use fans and vents to keep the temperature cool inside the house. This will help people avoid passing out or getting sick. It will also decrease the need for people to stand outside to get cool, which will lessen the noise outside.
- Abide by state and federal law related to alcohol and other drugs.
- Remember that charging admission at the door or selling alcohol at your party is a violation of state law and is therefore illegal (see ORC4301). In addition, collecting money increases your risk of being a victim of crime (theft) and of attracting party-goers not on your guest list, as charging often is perceived as similar to a “club event.”

THE MOST COMMON REASONS THE POLICE COME TO A PARTY

- Party noise (people yelling, loud music)
- Fights
- People gathering outside (hanging in street, driveways, porches)
- Public urination or vomiting (in street, on houses, on cars)
- Destruction of public or private property (vandalism, theft, arson)
- Pulling fire alarms (typically in apartments)

A FINE MESS - WHAT CAN THE POLICE DO IF YOUR PARTY GETS “BUSTED”?

Hosts may be fined by the city for any or a combination of the following:
- noise complaint
- liquor law violations (ORC 4301)
- violation of state or federal laws regarding alcohol or other drug use
- under-age consumption
- open container violation (ORC 4301.62)

Please remember that you may also be charged with violations of the College rules and regulations on campus. If you are found responsible of a violation in the College’s conduct system, the outcomes could involve probation, suspension, or expulsion (depending on the severity of your offense).

Your record may become tarnished if you are a minor in possession of alcohol or if you furnish alcohol for a minor:

General Consequences:
- You could face a fine up to $1,000 and/or jail time up to 6 months.
- Your license could be revoked.
- Your auto-insurance rate may increase substantially.
**College Consequences:**
- Your student record may be affected if the Dean of Students gets involved.
- In some cases, parents may be notified.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THE POLICE SHOW UP AT MY PARTY?**
- DO NOT run away from the police, lock the door on them, or ignore them. Avoidance will only make the situation worse, so come clean up front.
- DO stop the music and the party and ask everyone to leave calmly. Emphasize to guests that the hosts are responsible for speaking with the police, not the guests.
- DO find the most sober and coherent host to talk to the officers. Uncontrollable and uncooperative hosts will only aggravate the situation.
- If given a citation, DO go to your court date to address the situation and citation.

**CONCLUSION**

Parties occur today, occurred when your parents were in college, and will occur when your kids are in college. Parties can be high-risk situations with many, potentially costly, consequences. Much of the responsibility is on you as the host. This guide is based on perspectives and experiences of college students who have been in these situations and want to keep the party environment fun and safe for all involved.