OVERVIEW OF MODULE 5

This module introduces students to successful social hosting with alcohol, everything from formal events planned over several months to informal events organized in a few hours—or even a few minutes. The vast majority of problem parties are unplanned, spontaneous get-to-gethers. When a problem party is hosted by a student organization's members, there can be guilt by association, even if the party was not officially hosted by the organization. In some college towns, having three or more members of a student organization involved in a problem party is enough to create legal, civic, or judicial problems for the individuals involved, the student organization, and the organization's officers (even if they weren't present and didn't know about the party). Disasters associated with a party—even an informal one—have permanently shut down student organizations on many campuses.

Common party-related problems:

- An accusation of rape or sexual assault by a party guest or group member

- The injury or alcohol poisoning of a party guest that requires emergency medical attention (especially someone who is under the legal drinking age and who was supplied alcohol by the hosts)

- A death due to drunk driving by a party guest

- The vandalism of property or the area surrounding the party due to intoxicated guests or hosts

- Noise complaints from neighbors

- Trash

- Illegal parking resulting in limited access

- Citations for selling alcohol without a license, maintaining a disorderly house, and/or procuring alcohol for a minor

Every one of these problems can be avoided with careful planning and then sticking to the plan.

This module's Party Planner Tool contains three elements: general guidance about the most common problems at get-togethers with alcohol and how to avoid them, a party planning resource guide and checklist to simplify planning the most critical aspects of a party, and a post-party debrief tool to learn from the experience and determine what to do differently the next time.

Planning isn't popular; some students believe that planning spoils all the spontaneity and fun. Far from it. Good planning, including a post-party review of how well the plan worked, is the most effective way to have a great party and avoid unwanted problems. When planning is combined with a clear understanding of relevant alcohol-related laws and policies, as well as the presence of peers willing to step in if things get off-track, the chances of a party becoming dangerous are significantly reduced.

Many student organizations have some members who believe that bedlam is the mark of a fabulous event. They do not see a party as successful unless people get very drunk and behave recklessly. They may also believe that hosting wild parties is what gives the group a great reputation on campus. Rather than refuting these myths, the best approach is to let the results speak for themselves by sharing the stories of student organizations that were shut down or criminally cited for a party that got out of hand, and being realistic about the effect of out-of-control parties on recruitment, member retention, and the group's actual reputation on campus and in the community.

NOTE: The student organization may already have party planning materials from your college/university or a national organization. With the student leaders, determine whether the existing party planning resources can be adapted to meet the objective of successful social hosting with alcohol. You may decide that the existing resources are sufficient and that this module can be omitted.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. **Read through the Module 5 Party Planner Tool before meeting with the student leaders.**

2. **The leaders may want to have a discussion with the group's members about how to prevent informal parties from causing problems.** In addition, if one or more members are responsible for planning parties and events for the group, they may need support implementing the Party Planner Tool. If the leaders want to have a group discussion and/or meet with the group's event planners, remind them to schedule these meetings.

3. **Help the student leaders to make sense of the materials. Student leaders and members should watch the Module 5 video** *Problem-Free Parties.* At this point, the leaders may also want to revisit the Module 2 *Connect the Dots* video to make sure that members see the connection between the decisions they make and the outcomes they experience

4. **The goal is to make party planning and party debriefing standard practices for the group.**
It may take several attempts before those who plan parties for the group begin using the Party Planner Tool. If the group has a party that turns problematic, be sure to debrief with the leaders and perhaps the entire membership afterward to explore how planning ahead could have the prevented the problems. And if the group hosts a party that results in no problems, be sure to emphasize the role that planning played in the positive outcome. Student leaders and members need to make an ongoing commitment to carefully planning parties; doing so will, in time, lead to change.

5. **Student organizations with a history of hosting problem parties or that are on their last chance with their institution or the community may need to submit their plan for upcoming parties.** In this situation, students can complete this module's Party Planning Resource Guide, Pre-Party Checklist, and Post-Party Debrief and submit them to you or an administrator. Reviewing the group's initial party plans provides a good opportunity for you to coach success in responsible social hosting.