

CASE STUDY

KENNETH SALTZMAN

On June 25, 2015, Samuel Ellis, a former star quarterback at Thomas S. Wootton High School in Maryland, drove his car off the road; it went over 100 feet airborne. The car struck a tree and flipped over. As a result, two of the passengers, his classmates, were killed and another passenger was injured. When police arrived on the scene, they found alcohol from a party, and it was still cold. Ellis pled guilty to two counts of vehicular manslaughter and was given a four-year prison sentence.¹

A major issue surrounding this accident was where Ellis obtained the alcohol. Kenneth Saltzman, 49 years old at the time of the accident, was hosting a party for his daughter's friends. His teenage daughter invited her friends to the house. A 21-year-old bought vodka and a 17-year-old used a fake driver's license to buy beer. It was also reported that the teens were playing beer pong and were doing shots. The teenagers were in the basement while Kenneth Saltzman was upstairs.

Kenneth Saltzman pled guilty to furnishing alcohol to a minor. He was fined \$2,500 for each criminal count, which amounted to a total of \$5,000 in fines.² The parents of one of the victims, the Murks, viewed the fine "as the equivalent of nothing more than going to court, paying a parking fine and being done

with it." Following the accident, further investigation revealed that many teenagers reported that they thought of the Saltzman's house as a "safe place" to drink without the fear of getting into trouble.

Some maintain that the reason parents allow teenagers to have parties where alcohol is allowed is because "teens are going to drink anyway and it is safer at home."³ States vary in terms of passing laws that impose liability against individuals deemed responsible for underage drinking events on property they own, lease, or control. These laws are referred to as "social host" laws. See Figure 16.1 for a summary of states that have "social host" laws.

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Do you think some people consider drinking alcohol to be less of a problem than taking other types of drugs?
2. What do you think when you hear parents say, "I'd rather my kids drink in our home, with our knowledge, rather than somewhere else behind my back?"
3. Do you think all states should have "social host" laws?