Sororities and fraternities have hosted social events at Iowa State University for many years. After reviewing policies, protocol, and behavioral trends within social events in sororities and fraternities, the Iowa State administration determined a change was needed to create a safer environment for sororities and fraternities. The intended outcome of an improved social event registration procedure was to set a standard for events in the best interests of the safety and well-being of students. At the same time the Iowa State administration was reviewing social event policies for sororities and fraternities, the North American Interfraternity Conference was identifying pilot campuses for the Health and Safety Initiatives that have largely become policies across the country for fraternities. It created the perfect opportunity for partnership as a pilot campus for the NIC Health and Safety Initiatives.

**Being a Pilot Campus**

As a pilot campus, the Iowa State University Interfraternity Council and university staff committed to several key changes:

1. Alcohol is only permitted in private living quarters of chapter facilities for residents above the legal drinking age and must below 15% alcohol by volume (ABV).
2. During a registered event, alcohol possession and distribution must be restricted to common spaces of a chapter facility for the duration of the event.
3. Alcohol above 15% ABV may only be served by a licensed third-party vendor at registered events.
4. In partnership with each host institution, the fraternity community will set a standard that significantly reduces and caps the number of events with alcohol.
5. Each fraternity will utilize a standard event management and guest registration procedure that will be administered by a third-party company.
6. Events must be limited to a guest-to-member ratio of no more than 3:1 for events with alcohol, provided that no event with alcohol exceed a campus maximum number or fire code.

As the team reviewed the pilot campus expectations, it was determined the institutional staff would move forward with the development of a social event registration policy that would include all of the above criteria, except the first expectation. The team felt this needed to come from the chapters since this would require individual chapter monitoring and oversight. Chapter and council leaders were in favor of setting this limit, but concerns rose about being in trouble. Chapter leaders were afraid to create a policy that could place the chapter on social
probation or have other consequences as not all members of the chapter may be ready to make this change. The Interfraternity Council created a bylaw requiring each chapter to create a policy that would include the alcohol by volume restriction as indicated above. This would allow chapters the ability to self-govern their members. In the event an allegation is reported to the IFC, the council would follow up with the chapter to make sure they followed their own protocol.

There are four clear components to the Iowa State Social Event Procedures for Sororities and Fraternities: definition of an event involving alcohol, requirements for conducting events involving alcohol, event registration, and sanctions for violations.

**Definition of an Event Involving Alcohol**
The definition of an event involving alcohol provides similar guidance that many national organizations provide their members and is common language found in other institution policies. The goal in defining social events is to encourage sororities and fraternities to think critically about their functions and events. An event involving alcohol is defined as any social event, program, or activity that involves the use (i.e., possessing, consuming, manufacturing, selling and/or distributing) of alcohol. While the definition itself is simple, sororities and fraternities have been provided a list of guiding questions to ask themselves when determining if something is considered an event.

Sorority and fraternity members must be aware of when an activity/gathering that may not have intended to constitute an organizational event nevertheless evolves into an event that should have been registered and conducted in accordance with these procedures and requirements. In such instances, the organization is expected to shut down the event or immediately cease all alcohol service, consumption, and possession.

**Requirements for Conducting Events Involving Alcohol**
First and foremost, alcohol may never be the focus of an event. Since the majority of students attending social events are under the legal age to consume alcohol, the chapter must clearly indicate the purpose and intent of the event. Successful events have focused on celebrating homecoming, award ceremonies, or themed social events which have included costumes, games, or other activities.

Sober monitors and hosts are outlined specifically in the policy. The sorority or fraternity must have at least one (1) sober member for every fifteen (15) people present at the event. The sober member is responsible for monitoring the safety and well-being of the attendees. In addition:
1. The sober member must be sober and abstain from consuming alcohol or any other intoxicant prior to and throughout the event.
2. The sober member must an initiated member of the organization. Sober monitors must be at least 50% upperclassmen.
3. New members may serve as sober monitors but do not count towards the organization’s required monitors.

Should an issue arise, these expectations regarding sober monitors have been created to ensure the sober monitor has the social capital to manage the situation. It also creates an opportunity for the newest members to participate in the process to learn without bearing the burden of responsibility.

**Event Approval and Registration Procedures**

While advisers are not required to approve social events, they are required to submit an acknowledgement that they have reviewed the social event policy with the chapter. This must be updated any time the adviser, risk manager, or social chair changes.

Guest lists are required to be submitted at the time of event registration, but the chapter may provide updates to the guest list as needed. Minor changes to the list are permitted, and the chapter must submit a guest list within 72 hours of the event concluding.

Those members and guest who are at least 21 years old are provided with a wristband to wear at the event. Wristbands are provided by the office and given to the chapter the day before the event at a final check-in meeting with council leadership.

Chapters are required to serve non-salty food. Food prior to consuming alcohol may slow the rate of absorption of alcohol. Additionally, salty foods inspire an individual to drink more. Chapters are also required to provide an alternative beverage that does not include alcohol. Water may be an option, but it cannot be the only option. Chapters have reported when an alternative option is available, members and guests sometimes refrain from consuming alcohol.

When the chapter is hosting a “BYO” or “bring your own” alcohol event, no beverage greater than 15% alcohol by volume is permitted. Consumption is also limited to six 12 oz. beers per person, four 12 oz. wine coolers, or four 6 oz. single-serve wine bottles. The policy specifically indicates these should be maximums and not intended to be standard. All non-BYO events must include a licensed third-party vendor, and the license must be submitted at the time of registration.
Security personal is required to be hired at all events not at a licensed third party. This helps chapter leadership if situations start to get out of hand. Chapters have reported successful assistance from security companies when guests have attempted to enter the party and have not been on the guest list.

The chapter is required to submit a transportation plan. This plan indicates how the members and guests will safely attend the event. It is preferred chapters utilize common transportation (bus, shuttle, etc.) however, they may submit alternative plans focusing on the safety of guests and reducing the liability of the organization and university.

**Violation of Procedures**

All events are registered in advance. Chapters that do not submit events that follow the registration guidelines are notified their event is not in compliance and they are prohibited from hosting the event.

The judicial team works collaboratively to do check-in calls with all involved agencies. The venue, security, and transportation all receive customer service calls to understand how the event went and to identify any challenges. Chapters also provide their own feedback for social events. Students, alumni, council leadership, community members, and university staff may also report any alleged violations.

Any violations of the procedures are reviewed by the sorority and fraternity judicial team which includes governing council representatives, Office of Student Conduct staff, and Sorority and Fraternity Engagement staff. The team determines were the alleged violation should start to be adjudicated. It may be adjudicated by each entity.

**Understanding the Impact**

The most common instances of unregistered social events are connected to social media. Either members have tagged the chapter social media page or photos have been shared through social media that include chapter symbols, letters, or images at a social function. In nearly two years of registered social events, there have been no violations of policies reported. This is a significant change. Social event registration is not new to Iowa State, but it was previously managed directly by the councils. Since the office has taken leadership of the initiative, chapters have been provided greater consistency in expectations.

It does require a significant amount of time to review social events, especially in the fall. Given the football schedule and other significant university events, many chapters tend to host social
events on the same weekend. The burden of reviewing events ebbs and flows throughout the semester, but when it is busy the workload is heavy.

The biggest impact has been the amount of time chapters are using to plan social events. Chapters are now planning events several weeks in advance and making conscious decisions about how to make events safer for their guests.

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Billy Boulden has worked with sororities and fraternities for more than 10 years. After joining Pi Kappa Phi at Christopher Newport University, Billy went to work for his fraternity. He completed a master’s in organizational leadership from Gonzaga University while on fraternity staff. He worked with sorority and fraternity communities at Longwood University and Florida State University. He currently serves as the assistant dean of students and director of sorority and fraternity engagement at Iowa State University and an educator and keynote speaker for ForCollegeForLife where he focuses on working with students to make the most out of their sorority/fraternity experience.