



## **Beta Theta Pi Fraternity Substance-Free Housing Information and Frequently Asked Questions**

*If you have additional questions about substance free housing, please contact Anne Emmerth, Director of Chapter Services ([anne.emmerth@beta.org](mailto:anne.emmerth@beta.org)) (800-800-BETA) or John Reineke, Director of The Cornerstone Housing Program ([john.reineke@beta.org](mailto:john.reineke@beta.org)) (800-800-BETA).*

The mission of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity is to create Men of Principle for a Principled Life. To support that mission, our chapter living environments should reflect the values of the organization. Therefore, we strongly encourage all of our chapter facilities to adopt a substance free environment and to work with local chapter leaders, advisors, house corporation volunteers, and alumni to implement and support that environment.

On August 1, 2004, the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity Board of Trustees confirmed that all new colonies and restarted chapters will be required to implement a substance-free housing policy, in perpetuity, if they own, rent, or maintain communal housing of any kind. The Board reached this decision after analyzing the performance of substance-free housing chapters versus non-substance free housing chapters and studying the role that illegal consumption of alcohol and drugs in chapter facilities plays in risk management and the deterioration of chapter culture.

### **Why was this policy adopted?**

We believe that a substance free policy creates a safer environment for our members and guests. Analysis of chapters and the larger fraternity and sorority community demonstrated that the presence of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs creates conditions that deteriorate the facility, its furnishings and individuals' attitude toward and treatment of our homes; 70% of chapter members are under the legal age to purchase and possess alcohol; and in most campus communities a multitude of establishments exist for undergraduates who choose to engage in those activities.

### **What "substances" are included in the policy?**

Substances are defined as alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and legal drugs obtained or used in an illegal manner.

### **What constitutes "Beta housing?"**

Any facility that is owned by a Beta Theta Pi house corporation, rented exclusively to Beta members by a landlord / college / university or rented by individual members as the identified chapter house,

residence hall floor, apartment, lodge, or meeting space of the chapter constitutes Beta housing for this policy. The policy also applies to the grounds and parking areas associated with the facility.

**Are all chapters of Beta Theta Pi required to be substance free?**

No, only new colonies and restarted chapters after August 1, 2004 will be required to implement substance-free housing. Current colonies at the time of the resolution were grandfathered in under this policy and the associated House Corporation made a decision regarding the policy. However, we strongly encourage all of our chapters to adopt a substance-free living environment and can help you with that transition.

**How many Beta chapters are currently substance free?**

As of January, 2017, about 62% of our housed chapters live in substance-free environments. Here’s a more detailed breakdown:

Number of open chapters (including colonies)		137
Number of chapters with some kind of housing		104
Number of chapters in houses		
Number in campus owned facilities	35	
Number renting from private landlords	8	
Number in Beta-owned houses	61	
Number of chapters in campus residence halls / dorm floors		6
Number of chapters in lodges		5
Number of chapters with no housing or meeting space at all		33
Number of Beta living environments that are alcohol free		64
Percent of Beta living environments that are alcohol free		62%

**What are the benefits of substance-free housing?**

There are several benefits to substance-free housing, including:

- Chapter facilities are cleaner and better maintained.
- It creates a safer environment for members and guests, especially when social functions with alcohol are held in alternate locations.
- Parents prefer substance-free housing for their students, especially freshmen and sophomores.
- Host campuses support substance-free housing; Beta’s policy aligns with the residence hall policies of many of our host campuses.
- There tends to be less damage to the chapter facility, which means that the house corporation can keep room and board rates lower and spend money on upgrades, instead of repairs.
- Alumni prefer to donate to the house corporation if they believe that their investment will be well taken care of.

**What if some of the members living in the house are over 21? Can they have alcohol in their rooms?**

No. A substance-free facility means that the entire facility is substance free – including both private and public spaces.

**Our chapter space is a dorm floor and our campus allows alcohol in the dorms for students who are over 21. Is that OK?**

No. Even if your host campus has more lenient alcohol policies, you must abide by Beta's substance free housing policy for your chapter housing.

**Does being substance-free mean that we can't have alcohol at any of our events?**

No. It only means that the events you host at the chapter facility (and on the grounds) must be alcohol free. For most chapters, this means that your social functions (mixers, date parties, formals) will be held at an alternate location like a restaurant, club, or hotel.

**Will being substance-free hurt us in recruitment?**

Only if you let it. Being substance free should be a point of pride and can help you attract members who care about academics, leadership, and authentic friendship. Students have lots of options for having fun – we believe that the chapter facility should be substance free so that every member can reach his full potential. As a reminder, all sorority houses have been substance free for almost 30 years, and they have no problem attracting members. Your members should be prepared to answer questions about the facility during recruitment and use your substance-free policy as a selling point.

**What about our alumni? Won't they expect to come back and have drinks when they visit the house?**

It's true that some alumni only remember the "good old days" when they were in the chapter, which may have included drinking in the house. But we have found that most alumni understand that a substance-free environment is in the best interest of our current members and guests and promotes academic success and safety. When house corporations solicit donations from alumni, we find that alums tend to give more if they believe that their money will be used wisely and their investments preserved.

**What's the best way to enforce a substance-free living environment?**

There's no single thing that leads to success. Where we see chapters do it well, it's a combination of:

- Every member believing that he has a personal obligation to hold himself to the policy.
- Members who are willing to hold their Brothers accountable to the policy.
- A strong Kai Committee that quickly and consistently holds members accountable to the policy.
- Chapter officers who understand the value of a substance free environment and who are able to explain the "why" to chapter members and alumni.
- Advisors and house corporation volunteers who are totally bought into substance free housing.
- Chapter members who see this as a point of pride and are willing to use it as a selling point during recruitment.
- A strong pledge education program that openly addresses the substance-free living environment and the benefits and challenges it presents.
- Ongoing discussion during chapter meetings and roundtables about the "why" and the struggles members may be having upholding the substance free policy.
- Chapter officers who ask for help if they're struggling to keep the facility substance free.
- Alumni who understand the value of providing a safe and desirable living environment for our current members.