

The Youth Fire Setting Problem

14,500 child-playing structure fires reported
130 civilian deaths
810 civilian injuries
\$328 million in direct damage
85% of fires reported are in the home
33% of fire play reported under the age of 4
63% of fatal victims are under the age of 5

NFPA Statistics

The Illinois Fire Safety Alliance (IFSA) began managing the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program in 2008. The IFSA updated the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program, reworking the curriculum and providing the interventionists with standardized resources throughout the state allowing for increased success and support to address the needs of the fire setting problem.

Within the state of Illinois, there has been no prior detailed statistical data available regarding youth and fire setting. The IFSA has created a standardized reporting system as a means to discern the youth fire setting incident and the surrounding circumstances. In 2016, the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal will start overseeing the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program, and will continue with the standardized reporting system that IFSA has used throughout the years.

The overall goal of OSFM Youth Firesetter Intervention Program is to reduce the frequency and severity of the tragedy and trauma caused by child and youth fire related activities.

Why Youths Set Fires

In order to understand why fire setting behavior occurs, it is best to look at where and why children set fires. The levels of risk are based on the likelihood of the Youth to repeat fire setting incidents.



Little Risk/Curiosity

Curiosity and experimentation is the most common motivator in unsupervised fire setting. Most fire setters fall into this category. Many of these incidents may go unreported. With early identification and education, these Firesetters have little risk for future involvement in fire setting.

Moderate Risk/Troubled

Youths who fall into this category may have a history of fire setting and without intervention will most likely set fires again. The fire setting may be a cry for help. The earlier a Youth is identified and provided with appropriate intervention reduces the possibility of future fire setting. Without intervention, there is a significant chance of future fire setting.

Moderate Risk/Delinquent

Youths who fall into the delinquent category differ from those in the prior categories in that they exhibit a certain pattern of aggressive, deviant, and sometimes criminal behavior. These behaviors may begin to surface at a young age. A defiant and stubborn preschooler may turn into a deceptive child or pre-teen and who may engage in fire setting, petty theft and vandalism as a teenager. Family dynamics and anti-social behavior can also play a role.

Definite Risk/Criminal

Less than 1% of Firesetters fall into this category. These Youths may be hospitalized or are being treated for a mental disorder. They can best be helped by mental health professionals.

Youth Firesetter Interventionists

Youth Firesetter Interventionists are Illinois state certified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal through the OSFM Youth Firesetter Intervention Program. Interventionists are trained in accordance to the National Fire Protection Association 1035 Standards regarding Youth fire setting. Interventionists work confidentially with communities to provide Youth Firesetters and their families fire safety education and prevention.

YOUTH FIRE SEッター INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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Youth Firesetter

Intervention Program YFSIP

A statewide standardized program to provide prevention education/intervention and referrals if warranted for the children and families of Illinois to reduce the frequency and severity of fires set by Youths. The components of this program are: Identification System, Intake Process, Interview/Screening Strategies, Education/Intervention Services, and Evaluation/Follow-up. Partnering with the fire service, this program will provide a coordinated referral center for the assessment and treatment of Youth Firesetters and their families, thereby slowing down the often devastating results of fire setting. Prevention education can quell the youth fire problem, but only when properly targeted, designed, and delivered. The behaviors causing the problem must be considered because what motivates their behavior is the surest clue to solving the youth fire setting problem.



Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal

The purpose of the OSFM is to bring together persons or groups with a common interest in fire safety, fire prevention, and public education, to promote programs and disseminate information related to fire safety and fire prevention, and to assist burn survivors through Burn Camp and other related programs.

The Board of Directors is made up of volunteers from the fire service, medical community, education and burn survivor population.

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