

	Standard Operating Guideline – West Fargo Fire Department		02.007
	Subject: Juvenile Fire Setters Program		
	Section: Community Risk Reduction		
	Date Authorized: 12/1/2019	Authorized by:	
Date Reviewed:	Chief Daniel Fuller		

Intent

The intent of this guideline is to establish standard procedures to address juvenile fire setters in the community

References

Definitions

Guideline

1. The Juvenile Fire Setters Program is an important tool in preventing fires in the community and falls under the Risk Reduction Division
 - a. A risk reduction officer should be identified as the intervention coordinator

2. Juveniles who are suspected or confirmed to be setting fires can be referred to the program from
 - a. Parents
 - b. Caregivers
 - c. Schools
 - d. Fire and Emergency Services
 - e. Law Enforcement
 - f. Mental Health
 - g. Child Protective Services

3. For fire companies who are reporting a juvenile fire setter, the following should be completed
 - a. On-scene youth fire setting questionnaire
 - i. If the incident resulted in injury, to the fire setter or others, immediately contact the investigator on duty and the intervention coordinator to complete the interview
 - b. Fire incident report
 - c. Pictures of what was set on fire, and any devices used for ignition

4. When the intervention coordinator contacts the parent or legal guardian of the juvenile, a release of information form must be completed.
 - a. If the parents or legal guardian does not wish to complete the form, a criminal referral maybe needed to proceed with an intervention
 - b. A record of all contacts and attempted contacts should be made and attached to the case, which will prove valuable in case of repeated referrals to the program
 - c. A record of refusal to participate in the program should also be made

5. The main component of the intervention is the assessment. The purpose of an assessment tool is to gain information necessary to determine an appropriate intervention strategy

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- a. It is recommended that two people, one being an intervention specialist, conduct the interviews in the home of the referred family so that they have an opportunity to gather information about the family condition and lifestyle
 - b. The family may also feel more at home and possibly provide more information. If only one intervention specialist is available, it is recommended to conduct the interviews at a neutral location, not the home, nor the fire station. Community centers, schools, libraries are appropriate
6. Separate the parents from the juvenile for the screening process. Go through each section of the screening tool if other juveniles are mentioned as being involved with the fire, it will be important to follow up with those families. It will be very important to get contact information
 7. Based on the assessment scores, make a referral. Have the family sign an agreement that they will attend the fire setting education program and make a date to meet for the session. If the child is court ordered to attend and they fail to meet the contract, charges may be filed
 8. Fire setting prevention education begins during this process. Let the parents know that access to ignition devices is a key component of fire setting behavior. They need to take responsibility right now to eliminate access to lighters and matches, which may include locking them up.
 9. The regional program consisting of multidiscipline intervention specialists should meet on a regular basis. To review cases and the corresponding intervention strategies and evaluations of the interventions in order to maintain the highest level of customer service for the community.
 10. The goal for intervention is to respond to the family’s needs and provide appropriate referrals and education in order to stop the risky behavior. Just as every child is different, every intervention will also be different.
 - a. If the fire-setting behavior stems from curiosity, an educational intervention is appropriate
 - b. If the behavior stems from stress, crisis or mental health issues, the intervention will likely involve other service providers
 - c. If the behavior is delinquent, a restorative justice portion can be very effective.
 - d. Community Impact reports are recommended for children older than eight years of age
 11. The intervention strategies are decided by the intervention coordinator who is working on the case after carefully reviewing the assessment notes

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- a. It may involve consultation with the regional program, and other agencies involved with the family such as social services or mental health
 - i. For children in need of other services, the program will assist in finding an agency best suited for the family’s needs
 - ii. Fire-setting prevention education is one of the most critical parts of the intervention and is the portion of the strategy that is best provided by the fire service educators
 - iii. When children have an experience with fire it is critical that they gain an understanding of why their behavior was inappropriate. This involves helping the youth to understand and identify appropriate behavior, taking responsibility for their actions

- 12. Many times, a parent or other agencies that have not been educated in appropriate intervention strategies may think that they have offered direction to a child who was involved with fire. Parents visiting the program have usually attempted to educate their child about fire in one of the following approaches;
 - a. Instilling fear in the child
 - b. Punitive measures only
 - c. Ignoring the problem so as not put ideas into the child’s head
 - d. Explaining unrealistic outcomes
 - e. Rarely do parents whose children have problems with fire give a detailed explanation of how and when fire should be used. Most adults do not know much more about fire than the children do

- 13. The parents are an important part of the educational process. The parent should accompany the child through the educational process, whether that is sitting through a class with them, or participating in one on one education. This will re-enforce the family’s understanding of the fire-setting behavior and help them learn how to prevent inappropriate fire use in the future.

- 14. Exit from the fire-setting intervention program typically occurs after the education session is completed, a post test is passed and if necessary a referral made to an outside agency.
 - a. If one exits the program prior to completion they fail the program and the outcome should be documented in the juveniles file.
 - b. When the intervention is completed it is important to have evaluation forms for the participants filled out. This can grant insight into ways in which the program may be improved.

- 15. Once a person exits the program it is important that a follow –up procedure takes place. Follow up is established so that the youth and the family understand that the program continues to be concerned for their welfare at a six month and one-year interval

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