

Juvenile Fire Safety and Intervention Program

USE OF THE CHILD AND PARENT SCREENING TOOLS

The Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Child and Parent Screening Tool offers an accurate means to identify the problem and serve in providing appropriate intervention for the youth. The Screening Tool is composed of two sections, the *Youth/Child Interview* and the *Parent Interview* with *Parent Checklist*. It is recommended that the Child Screening interview be conducted with the juvenile separated from the parents. The interview should include a team partner or be conducted in an open room of the home. The Screening Tools do not release the fire service from the need to properly conduct cause and origin fire investigations. When using the Screening Tools, the following procedures are recommended:

- Explain to the juvenile and parent(s) the purpose of the interview.
- Develop a rapport with the juvenile and the parent(s).
- Ask all the questions on the form so that the MDT may make their decisions on what type of intervention(s) are required based on the full extent of information available.

It is recommended that both the *Child/Youth Interview* and the *Parent Interview* be completed. The highest degree of accuracy will be achieved if both interviews are conducted. The Parent Interview can be conducted via telephone with the child's parents or other caregiver (face-to-face interview is preferred); however, the *Child/Youth Interview* must be conducted in person and only after the proper parental release has been executed. It is also recommended that if a fire or police incident report has been generated, it should be included in the individual's file.

While the questions on the Screening Tool should be asked as written, there may be occasion when additional information is offered and other questions developed as the interview continues. In such cases those questions should be pursued and recorded along with their responses.

SCORING AND REFERRAL PROCEDURE

Detailed instructions for the use of the Screening Tool are incorporated in the document. The person using the tool should add the face value of the checked responses for both the youth and the parent interviews and enter the total on the lines provided.

Referral and other interventions are based on the decision of the MDT, derived from the information received from the interview(s), and may be influenced by the scores acquired from the interview. Intervention(s) may range from providing fire safety education to referring the youth for mental health services, and other interventions as may be deemed necessary.

Child and Parent Screening Tools CASE # _____
SCORING AND REFERRAL PROCEDURE

Add the face value of the checked responses for both the youth and the parent interview. Enter the total on the lines provided below:

Total Score: (Youth Interview) _____ (Parent Interview) _____

If the total number for the youth interview is from 14 – 19 then:

The fire behavior appears to be basically experimental in nature and set out of curiosity. This youth does not have a history of fire behavior. The intervention for a youth motivated primarily out of curiosity is fire education for the youth and the parent. The family should set clear rules about fire use in the home and practice home fire safety. Fire departments should emphasize the importance of working smoke alarms and home escape planning for these families. With education, curiosity firesetters usually do not continue their behavior. However, because curiosity firesetters do not understand the consequences of their actions, it is important that parents/caregivers increase their knowledge of fire safe practices.

If the total number for the youth interview is 20 – 42 then:

The youth has a sporadic history of firesetting and needs to be referred to other community agencies that serve children and their families. These agencies include community mental health centers, teen courts, youth service teams, multi-disciplinary teams, or juvenile departments. Many of these youths will require a more comprehensive mental health evaluation to determine the motives for his/her behaviors. Youth who score in this range could be starting fires as a cry for attention, as a response to a crisis event, to express anger or to defy authority. Many youth use fire because they seek a sense of power and control. The firesetting in this case is often a symptom of other family, school or peer group problems. Mental health professionals are positioned to evaluate all the dynamics affecting this youth's firesetting behavior.

In addition to referring the family for further evaluation, fire departments need to provide fire safety education. As with the curiosity firesetter, families often do not understand the power of fire and need to increase their knowledge of home fire safety practices. Again, emphasizing the importance of working smoke alarms and practicing home escape planning. After a mental health evaluation or court referral, fire departments may be asked to provide additional educational intervention. Helping educate the youth about how their firesetting behavior affected the community and the risk involved is another way fire departments can provide a service to the youth and their family and hold youth accountable for their behavior. Curricula for educating adolescent firesetters are available.

If question 4, 11 and/or 13 are answered with a 3 response, consider referring this youth for a crisis evaluation.

If the total number for the parent interview is from 10-15 provide fire safety education to the youth and parent.

If the number for the parent interview is between 16 – 30

Provide fire safety education to the youth and parent and direct the family to seek additional services of other community agencies to further evaluate the youth's firesetting behavior.

Referral should consist of:

1. A cover letter which includes:
 - a) a statement of the fire incident
 - b) observations of the interviewer
 - c) recommendations
2. Copies of the parent checklist and both screening interviews
3. Copy of the fire report
4. A brief summary of the education provided
5. Release of information form