



YOUTH FIRESETTING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

VISION 20/20 PROJECT · INSTITUTION OF FIRE ENGINEERS, USA BRANCH

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

⚠ **EVERY CAREGIVER CAN TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT YOUTH FIRESETTING — BEFORE A FIRE EVER STARTS**

UNDERSTANDING WHY CHILDREN SET FIRES

Children may start fires for many reasons: curiosity, boredom, peer pressure, or struggling with emotions and problems — all pointing to an unmet need. Caregivers can focus on stopping the behavior before it starts. With the right intervention, children can get the help they need and firesetting can stop.

CURIOSITY

Children are naturally curious about fire. Without guidance, curiosity can quickly become dangerous.

BOREDOM

Lack of structured activity or supervision can lead to fire experimentation and escalating risk.

PEER PRESSURE

Social influence — including online "challenges" — can lead youth to set fires to impress others.

EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

Some children use firesetting to express anger, frustration, or unmet behavioral health needs.

INTERVENTION WORKS

Youth firesetting intervention teams can teach curious children about fire science and provide resources to address unmet needs. Without that help, the behavior is likely to continue. **Research shows intervention is more than 97% effective at stopping firesetting** when the root cause is identified. Early action makes all the difference.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

PREVENTION AT HOME

- Keep fire-starting tools secured — locked up and out of sight of children
- Teach children to leave fire-starting tools alone and tell a grown-up if they find them
- Lighters that look like toys can confuse children. Do not buy or use them
- Make sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of the home and inside sleeping areas
- Be a good, fire-safe example in all that you do
- Talk with children about fire — what they see on media versus what fire is really like. Visit njfiresafety.com for the Fire Is video series

IF YOUR CHILD STARTS A FIRE

- Even a small fire is a serious warning sign that requires immediate attention
- Visit yfires.com/information-for-caregivers to find a youth firesetting intervention program in your area
- If no program exists nearby, visit your local fire department and ask for help

MORE RESOURCES

Find programs, guidance, and caregiver tools at yfires.com · Learn more about community risk reduction at strategicfire.org

HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

✓ SMOKE ALARMS

- ☐ On every level of the home
- ☐ Inside and outside sleeping areas
- ☐ Tested monthly
- ☐ Less than 10 years old

✓ CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

- ☐ Located on each level of the home
- ☐ In or near sleeping areas
- ☐ Tested monthly

✓ CANDLES & LIGHTERS

- ☐ Keep candles out of children's reach
- ☐ Use battery-operated flameless candles
- ☐ Lighters secured and away from children

✓ COOKING SAFETY

- ☐ Stay in the kitchen when boiling, frying, or grilling
- ☐ Keep children and pets at least 3 feet from the stove
- ☐ Cooking surface clear of flammable materials
- ☐ Small appliances unplugged when not in use

✓ HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

- ☐ Make and practice a home escape plan with everyone
- ☐ Know 2 ways out of every room
- ☐ Designate a safe meeting place outside the home
- ☐ Call 911 from your safe meeting place

KEY TAKEAWAY

You do not have to wait for a crisis to act. **Securing ignition sources, talking openly about fire safety, and knowing where to turn for help** are the most powerful things a caregiver can do. If firesetting does occur, intervention is highly effective — **reach out early and connect with the right resources.**