

## REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN CEDAR PARK'S YOUTH FIRESETTING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Contact the Cedar Park Fire Marshal's Office at 512-401-5200 to schedule an appointment

- A referral
- Are curious
- One parent must participate
- For youths between ages 2 and 17 years
- Be punctual
- Be prepared to invest 2 to 4 hours
- Be willing to answer personal questions

Siblings are welcome to attend. There is no cost for the program. All information is confidential.

Youth, parents, caretakers, educators, neighbors, friends and Fire Professionals are working together to make a difference.



## SMALL HANDS MAKE BIG FIRES!

City of Cedar Park Fire Marshal's Office  
Youth Firesetting Prevention and  
Intervention Program

Fire Administration Building  
450 Cypress Creek Road  
Cedar Park, Texas, 78613  
512-401-5200

[cedarparktexas.gov/youth-firesetting-and-prevention](http://cedarparktexas.gov/youth-firesetting-and-prevention)

Sources of information contained in this brochure: Pasadena Texas Fire Marshal's Office Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention Program informational materials; Federal Bureau of Investigation; National Fire Prevention Association; *From Dawn to Flame: Assessment and Treatment of Juvenile Firesetting Behavior*, Robert F. Stadlnik, Ed. D (2000)

## Cedar Park Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention Program



## SMALL HANDS MAKE BIG FIRES!



## WHAT YOU SHOULD DO WHEN CHILDREN PLAY WITH FIRE

## CHILD FIRE PLAY AND FIRESETTING

A fire is reported every 3½ hours in Texas as a result of children playing with fire, matches or other starter tools. Annually these child-set fires result in more than:

- 138 injuries
- 8 deaths
- \$9M in property loss

Of all the FBI index crimes (most serious felonies) arson has one of the highest rates of juvenile involvement. Of those arrested more than 50 percent are age 17 and under.

In Texas alone, more than 500 juveniles are arrested for arson annually. These children are responsible for more than \$6M in property loss.

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Fire interest in children is almost universal. Children of all ages are involved in firesetting behavior. Although curiosity about fire is natural, setting fire is not. Children who set fires may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Have little fire knowledge
- Are curious
- Are impulsive
- Are non-verbal/performance learners
- Are mischievous and oppositional
- Have learning disabilities
- Have been physically or sexually abused
- Are anxious and traumatized
- Are socially awkward and isolated
- Are sad and depressed
- Find it difficult to communicate with words
- Are angry and hostile
- Feel rejected and abandoned
- Are thrill-seeking
- Are violent and aggressive
- Have serious mental illness

Researchers have identified five general categories of juvenile firesetting behaviors.

### 1. CURIOSITY/EXPERIMENTATION FIRESETTERS

- Generally 3 to 7 years old
- Mostly boys (90 percent)
- Lack fire safety knowledge
- May be hyperactive and impulsive
- Learn by touching, experimenting and manipulating

### 2. TROUBLED/CRISIS FIRESETTERS

- Use fire to express or seek relief from anger, feelings of helplessness, sadness and confusion related to stress or major life changes
- Are commonly 6 to 12 years old
- Will continue to set fires until needs are met
- May set fires that are symbolic of the crisis

### 3. THRILL-SEEKING/RISK-TAKING FIRESETTERS

- Adolescent experimenters
- For adrenaline rush
- Experimenting with fire and “other” devices
- Fail to think through possible consequences
- Peer influence, enjoy attention

### 4. DELINQUENT/CRIMINAL FIRESETTERS

- 10 to 17 years of age under strong peer influence
- Often have malicious intent
- History of school failure and behavioral problems
- Targets are typically schools (after hours), abandoned buildings, open fields and dumpsters
- Show off

### 5. PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL FIRESETTERS

- Protective of fires
- Severely disturbed
- Chronic history of academic or psychological trauma
- Fires may have ritualistic and repetitive qualities
- Set many fires
- Fires have distinct patterns; may be ritualistic

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Become a part of the solution. Youth firesetting and intervention programs are successful in reducing firesetting behavior. According to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), without intervention more than 75 percent of youths who have played with or set fire will do it again.

The fire service is often the first to identify youths who have set fires. Fire personnel are experts in fire safety. Placing your child in an intervention program could prevent future firesetting.

- Enroll your child in a Youth Firesetting and Intervention Program
- Keep all matches and lighters out of reach of children
- Never allow anyone to use lighters or matches in an unsafe manner in your home
- Never leave stove or candle fires unattended
- Teach children to show you any unattended matches, lighters or fire-starting materials they may find

#### Set a good example

- Install and maintain smoke detectors
- Plan and practice home fire escape drills
- Regularly inspect your home for fire hazards
- Always use “safety sense” when making or using fire
- Point out the safety rules you and others are following throughout the day

