

**PHOENIX REGIONAL
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

YOUTH FIRESETTERS INTERVENTION PROGRAM

M.P. 206.10

02/01-R

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DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

The Phoenix Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Intervention Program has taken a positive approach in its efforts to stop youth firesetting. A goal to stop firesetting in our community by youths has been established. Assistance and support to the community is being offered. This is accomplished through investigation, identification, assessment, evaluation, education, and appropriate referral to mental health services described in the following M. P.

ENTRY INTO PROGRAM

Field Captain

If a youth firesetter is identified at the fire scene, the Field Captain can forward an electronic referral via the fire intranet or complete a Youth Assistance Referral form 91-57D which should be carried on each apparatus at all times. This form is then forwarded to the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program in Urban Services. A follow-up letter will be returned to the referring person via email.

If evidence at the fire scene (witnesses, type of fire, etc.) indicates a youth started the fire, the Captain must report this youth firesetter involvement on the Incident Encounter Form.

Station walk-ins

If a family comes to a fire station with their children who have been involved with firesetting, contact the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program; office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, phone 602-262-7757. If the situation appears to be a crisis, contact the Alarm Room for an appropriate referral.

NOTE: TOURS OF THE FIRE STATION ARE INAPPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME. This tends to be viewed by children as a reward for negative behavior of setting fires.

When to Call an Investigator

Fire Captains should call an investigator any time there is evidence of arson. If there are witnesses and/or suspects at the scene with information that could identify the youth firesetter.

Also, request an investigator if the fire is of unknown origin or the cause cannot be determined. If the fire was set intentionally and the child is 8 to 18 years old an investigator needs to be notified. A referral to the Juvenile Court Center will be made if the youth is charged with a misdemeanor or felony. The court will mandate the youth to the diversion program for first time offenses. This program consists of two components: fire safety education and consequences of firesetting, along with seven sessions of counseling. Youth charged with felony arson or repeat offenders will be referred to the Maricopa County Attorney's Office for prosecution.

When the investigator determines the fire was accidental due to curiosity, experimentation or negligence and was not intentionally set, the youth is typically not referred to the Juvenile Court Center. The investigator will make a referral to the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program and the family will attend the Youth Fire Safety Class on a voluntary basis.

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Family Referral

When a family is referred to the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program, a phone interview is conducted to determine the severity of the problem. If the child is curious or experimenting with fire, a referral is made to the Youth Fire Safety Class. In addition, if the problem seems to be a crisis situation, a referral is made to a mental health professional. The family is sent an invitation to the Fire Safety Class along with some information on fire safety.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Youth Fire Safety Class

The class is held one Saturday or one Thursday night a month at a Phoenix Fire Department facility. A Youth Firesetter Intervention Program team member instructs the class. The morning classes are held from 9:00 a.m. to noon for children ages 3 through 7. The preschool class is for children 3, 4, and 5. The 6 and 7-year-olds attend a separate class. Both morning classes teach fire safety behaviors.

The afternoon class is held from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. for youth ages 8 through 12. This class addresses the consequences of firesetting as well as responsibility issues incurred with firesetting. All classes are available at no cost to the family and are voluntary. Parental attendance is strongly recommended. The Thursday evening class is held from 6 to 9 p.m. for youths 8 through 17 years of age. The class addresses the consequences of firesetting as well as the responsibilities incurred with firesetting. In this class the students discuss Arizona Arson and Fireworks Laws, and the definitions for felony and misdemeanor.

Counseling

If the family is experiencing a severe problem with firesetting, the caseworker will refer them to a mental health professional. The counseling component consists of at least seven sessions. The provider will work with the client to investigate existing insurance. If no mental health insurance is available through the client, budgeted funds from the Phoenix Fire Department will be used. These visits are voluntary.

Diversion Program

When an investigator makes a referral to the Juvenile Court Center and the youth is charged with a misdemeanor, he/she may be eligible for the diversion program for first time offenders. This program consists of a three-hour class on the third Thursday of each month. A Youth Firesetter Intervention Program team member teaches the class. The primary focus of the class is on consequences of firesetting; i.e., life and property, misdemeanors, felonies and the effects on the fire service.

The youth is also referred to a mental health professional for at least seven sessions of counseling mandated by the Juvenile Court Center. Both components must be completed for credit. Youths charged with felony arson crimes and/or repeat offenders are not eligible for the diversion program and will be referred to the Maricopa County Attorney's Office for prosecution.

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Community Advisory Panel

This group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the problems of youth firesetting throughout the community. Their main objective is to reduce firesetting and make other agencies aware of the program. This group involves Child Protective Services, police, Juvenile Court Center, schools, mental health providers, burn center representatives, insurance companies, etc.

Urban Survival

The Urban Survival curriculum is utilized in many schools throughout Phoenix. Often, the Community Education Specialists (Fire Pals), along with school staff, have contact with firesetter's. The curriculum includes an explanation of firesetters and information for further assistance regarding entry into the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

FIRE MARSHAL

Oversees all programs in the Division of Urban Services.

PROGRAM MANAGER

Manages all elements of the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program. Is greatly involved with the community. Seeks grants to fund the mental health component.

DEPUTY CHIEF - INVESTIGATIONS

Oversees referrals from Fire Investigators to the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program. Works with the Program Manager to provide ongoing training.

DEPUTY CHIEF - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Supervises all elements of the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program. Interacts with and supports the Community Advisory Panel.

FIRE INVESTIGATOR

Responds to youth set fires when requested by a Fire Captain. Has the power to arrest if the fire was set knowingly, with intent, and the youth is between the ages of 8-18; a referral will be made to the Juvenile Court Center.

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YOUTH FIRESETTER INSTRUCTOR

Trained personnel are responsible for teaching the scheduled Youth Firesetter Intervention classes outlined in Section III, which include the Youth Fire Safety Class and Juvenile Court Center Diversion Program. The Instructor attends training sessions, which include quarterly meetings, and seminars.

They are also involved in updating and improving ongoing Youth Firesetter Intervention Program curriculum, new teaching techniques, and materials.

CASEWORKER

The caseworker receives and processes all referrals regarding juvenile firesetters. An intake form is completed over the phone with the family to determine the severity of the problem. Referrals are then made to an educational class and/or to a mental health professional for counseling. The caseworker also works with the Public Education Specialist to update and improve Youth Firesetter Intervention Program curriculum, new teaching techniques and materials.