

Youth Fire Intervention

Frequently Asked Questions

Is playing with fire normal for children?

Although it is common for children to be curious about fire, misuse of fire should not be tolerated. Children may see their parents or other adults smoking or using matches and lighters. Young children often learn by watching and modeling behavior. Teach children that matches and lighters are adult tools to help us with cooking and warming and that they are not toys.

Is firesetting a phase?

While curiosity about fire is normal, firesetting is not a normal phase for a child. If the firesetting behavior is not dealt with immediately, the behavior can escalate into dangerous and criminal behavior. Fifty percent of children misusing fire will continue and escalate if not intervened with education. TVF&R's Youth Fire Intervention Team is trained to help educate youths and their families on fire prevention, behavior, and intervention.

If the youth's parent or guardian seeks help for the child, will their neighbors and friends find out?

All information discussed during a voluntary intervention is kept confidential except for the disclosure of abuse since all our interventionists are mandatory reporters. Parents or guardians of a youth misusing fire may hesitate to seek help for their child for fear of alienation from their family, friends, and the community, but the ramifications of a child misusing fire can be devastating and deadly. Often youth misuse fire as a cry for help or signs of a bigger issue the youth may be dealing with. Our intervention team can work with a mental health professional to provide additional assistance if needed. Keep in mind, a court, school, or landlord-mandated intervention may require some information-sharing with the authority that requested the intervention.

Can I take my child to a fire station and have the firefighters scare my child to keep them from starting fires?

No, our firefighters are not certified youth fire interventionists. Research has shown that punishment does not provide the youth with a replacement for the unwanted behavior. Education and positive reinforcement are effective ways to influence change in behavior which are the basis for our program.

If we contact the fire department, what help will we receive?

Our certified youth fire interventionists will meet with the youth and their parent(s) or guardian(s). During the meeting, both the youth and their parent/guardian will answer questions that will determine the youth's history with firesetting in addition to questions regarding school, home life, and friendships to determine if there are other influences or events influencing this behavior. Based on the answers to the questions, the interventionist will cater fire-safety education that is appropriate for the youth and family. There is also an *Insight* workbook we will give to the youth that is based on the Oregon State Fire Marshal's curriculum for fire safety education and intervention.

For questions or comments, please call (503) 259-1408 or email [Youth Fire Intervention Program](#).