

JUVENILE FIRE SETTER INTERVENTION PROGRAM

It is the policy of the Elgin Fire Department to provide service to the parents/guardians of young fire setters who reside in the City of Elgin in the interest of decreasing the incidents of fire setting.

The Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program (JFSIP) has trained Intervention Specialists, who work in teams of two during the program. They work together to interview, educate, offer guidance, and possible referral to other agencies during this process.

Interviews will be conducted to determine whether the fire setting behavior was accidental, curiosity, or symptomatic of deeper problems. Educational intervention will be utilized for all fire setters. When fire setting behavior is determined to be indicative of more serious problems, referral to specialized Social Service Agencies will be recommended.

The Elgin Fire Department Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program is a multi-level approach to the education and/or treatment of identified juveniles involved in fire setting behaviors. The program is adaptable for pre-school ages through teens. Participation is voluntary except for those referred by the juvenile authorities. The program consists of five parts, each phase has a unique role in the process, yet all are interconnected. The five parts are: identification, education, assessment, referral, and follow-up.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification is what brings the child to our attention; this may be accomplished in a number of ways; teachers, parents/guardians, fire service or law enforcement personnel or other agencies may refer/identify a child as possibly needing an intervention.

EDUCATION

Regardless of the reason for a child setting a fire, education will always be provided. Education involves providing the family with the information they need to prevent future mishaps with fire. Parents/guardians must be included in this educational process. They may need as much or more education than the child. The fire setter intervention should emphasize how to avoid the inappropriate use of fire to prevent an incident from ever occurring.

ASSESSMENT

The initial contact is usually a phone call from a parent/guardian requesting assistance/direction for a juvenile fire setter. The Fire Intervention Specialist will follow up the inquiry and gather more information regarding a suspected fire setter. At this

time the parent/guardian is interviewed to gain background information on the child and family history.

The parents/guardian will be asked to bring the child in for interview. Location of interview will be determined at this point as well. The program requires that the parents commit to two appointments within a two week period.

During the first visit the interventionist will need to determine if education only will assist in solving the problem or if additional help to the family is needed. If there are problems that the fire safety education alone cannot solve, then appropriate help must be found for the family through a referral agency.

The second visit is to review “homework” that has been assigned to the juvenile fire setter, and to check on the progress that the child and family have made on moving towards maintaining a “fire safe” home environment.

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REFERRAL

The referral phase of the fire setter intervention involves finding the family the help they need to solve the issues that led the child to use fire inappropriately. These resources may be in the form of mental health intervention, parenting classes, juvenile justice or other appropriate services if necessary.

FOLLOW-UP

This is a crucial step in the program. Only through follow-up, will we be able to evaluate the quality of the intervention. This can only be determined by contacting the family. We must not believe that the intervention has been successful because the family has not called, or that we have not responded to a fire in their home.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/guardians can call the Elgin Fire Department for assistance at 847-931-6175. An Intervention Specialist Team will then be assigned to the case. Phone contact will be made with the parents/guardians within 48 hours of the assignment (whenever possible).

The parents/guardians will be informed of the program and invited to take advantage of the service. The parents are encouraged to make an appointment for them and their child. A Pre-Interview form will be filled out during the phone contact.