

Youth Fire Intervention Team  
Johnson County, KS



# YFIT



“Our mission is to preserve life and property by reducing youth firesetting and hazardous device incidents through intervention programs, education and referrals for youth and their families.”

# Coalition Partners



- Johnson County Fire and Emergency Services Chiefs Association
- Johnson County fire departments
- Johnson County Juvenile Court Services
- Johnson County Juvenile Corrections
- Kansas Department for Children and Family
- Office of the State Fire Marshal
- Safe Kids Johnson County
- Johnson County Mental Health
- University of Kansas Medical Center

# Youth Firesetting in the United States



- Between 2007 and 2011, an average of 49,300 fires involving playing with fire were reported to U.S. fire departments per year.
- These fires caused annual averages of 80 civilian deaths, 860 civilian injuries, and \$235 million in property damage.
- The majority of structure fires in homes caused by play were started by males (83%). Forty-three percent of the fires were started by a child under the age of 6.

Source: *Playing with Fire*, Richard Campbell, March 2014

# Youth Firesetting in the United States



- Younger children were more likely to set fires in homes, while older children and teenagers are more likely to set fires outside.
- Residential fires caused by children are more common in July and peak between the hours of 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.
- Outside fires started by older children and teenagers are more common in July and peak between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

# Common Youth Firesetting Motives



- Curiosity/Experimentation
- Imitating Behavior
- Peer Pressure
- Crisis
- Anger/Revenge
- During Illegal Activity

# YFIT Methodology



- Educate the child and family.
  - Standardized program and handbook, which represents all of the coalition.
- The handbook is:
  - Used as a framework document, which allows for instructor individuality.
  - Annually reviewed.

# YFIT Methodology



- Children enter via the courts or voluntarily.
- Child and parents are interviewed.
  - Fire Stoppers Children's Fire Prevention Program of Washington.
- The forms give the non-clinical user a broad picture of the child.
- The forms provide a composite score.
- A composite score of 12 or more should be referred for further services and the child may be at a higher risk for firesetting.



# YFIT Methodology



- One on one educational opportunities.
- Helps keep children, families and firefighters safe.
- Program is designed for four, one-hour sessions.
  - Fire dynamics.
  - Impact on the community.
  - Legal.
  - Presentation.
- Lesson plans for: 3-year olds, 4-year olds, 5-6 year olds, 7-9 year olds, 10-18 year olds and persons with special needs.

# YFIT Session 1 - Fire dynamics



- Pre-test.
- How fire works and why it does what it does.
  - Help the curious firesetter understand why fire is dangerous.
- Homework
  - Design and practice a family fire escape plan.
  - Locate and test smoke alarms.
  - Perform a home fire safety check.
  - Find and report on KC area fires.

# YFIT Session 2 - Impact on the community



- The impact of fire on the community.
  - This creates long response times for other stations to respond to. The student will also learn about the cost of a fire event for the tax payer.
- Homework
  - Case study on how children playing with fireworks affects the community.

# YFIT Session 3 - Legal



- Personal responsibility (choices and consequences).
- Court system
  - Costs (court and restitution).
  - Diversion and probation.
- Homework
  - Write a 200-word youth firesetting essay (child).
  - Write an essay from a parent's perspective (parent).
  - Write an apology letter to fire crew and Fire Chief.

# YFIT Session 4 - Final Presentation



- Essay presentations.
- Apology letter reading.
- (Homework is tailored to the standard and objectives for the students age group and their learning capacity. )
- Post-test.

# Team Referrals



- A referral form is used to help with documentation and information sharing.
- Consent can also be obtained for the team member to talk to other specialists.

# YFIT - Why it works



- Dedicated people, from different disciplines, share common objectives:
  - Preserve life and property by reducing youth firesetting and hazardous device incidents.
  - Modify dangerous behaviors through education.

# YFIT



Fire is not just a fire department problem but a community one. It will take a partnership between the fire service and the community to lower fire death and injury rates.



# Questions

