Straight Talk & Safe Schools: Youth Firesetting/Arson Prevention & Intervention

Karla Klas, BSN, RN, CCRP
Michigan Medicine – University of Michigan Trauma Burn Center
Ann Arbor, MI
Level I Adult Trauma & Verified Pediatric/Adult Burn Center
Identifying Need

17% increase in pediatric burn admissions

Repeat admits: YFS-related!
Identifying Need

- Punishment & discipline alone don’t work
- > 50% YFS have history abuse or maltreatment
- ACE’s & Burn Injuries: Long-term physical & mental health impact
Identifying Need

- ~50% U.S. arson arrests are youth <18 years old
- Felony and domestic terrorism charges
- School-to-prison pipeline
Intervention Design

**Objective:** Reduce YFS recidivism (and pediatric burn injuries!) by providing best practice and research-based intervention.

**Secondary:** Mitigate school-to-prison pipeline by providing alternative diversion program.

COLLABORATION!
**Implementation**

Sources and Community Stakeholders:
- Schools, Juvenile Justice, Fire Dept, Police, etc.
- MI, Alternative Activities, Decision-Making Skills, Coach, Mandatory Parent/Guardian, etc.

**Staff:** Injury Prevention Coordinator + Admin Asst. + Topic Experts (Social Work, Fire Dept, Survivor, YFS, etc.)

**Funding:** Donations, Grants, Volunteers, Hospital budget paid IP
Program Evaluation

↓ YFS and Behavior Change (not just #’s and 👍 likes!)

Pre-Program Assessment

PMH, # of fires, YFS incident, etc.

Intervention

Immediate Post-Program Evaluation

Satisfaction, improvements, understanding, etc.

4 – 6 Week Follow-up*

Email(s), call(s), letter(s), coach, contact referring agency

6 Month Follow-up* (Was 1 Year)

Program Feedback!

*Tracking YFS Recidivism
Program Outcomes

Sustained!

- Straight Talk: 1/132 (0.8%)
- No Straight Talk: 37/102 (36%)

2-year prospective study

(Recidivism tracked by Courts, Fire Departments, Task Force & Straight Talk “T-BOPP” records)

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Decreased Juvenile Arson and Firesetting Recidivism after Implementation of a Multidisciplinary Prevention Program

Objectives: In 1999, we developed the multidisciplinary Trauma Burn Outreach Prevention Program (T-BOPP), which focuses on the medical and societal consequences of firesetting behavior. The basis for this program development was a 17% increase in pediatric burn admissions. The purpose of this study was to determine the value of this trauma burn center prevention program from a financial, clinical, and recidivism perspective.

Methods: Juveniles (ages 4–17 years) were enrolled into our 1-day program on the basis of referrals from the county court system, fire departments, schools, and parents. The program's interactive components focus on medical, financial, legal, and societal impact of firesetting behavior, with emphasis on individual accountability and responsibility. The court system and fire departments tracked all episodes of firesetting behavior within their respective communities. Arson is defined as behavior with the intent to produce damage, whereas firesetting is defined as having no ill intent. The recidivism rate was determined using fire department and court follow-up records. Follow-up was from 8 months to 2.5 years. A random control group that did not receive T-BOPP education (noT-BOPP group) with identical entry criteria was used for comparison. Institutional review board approval was obtained.

Results: There were 132 juveniles in the T-BOPP group (66 arsonists and 66 firesetters) and 102 juveniles in the noT-BOPP group (33 arsonists and 69 firesetters). Fifty-nine T-BOPP participants had a medical history of behavioral disorders. Property damage for arson averaged $4,040, with additional court costs of $1,135 per incident. Family environment was an independent predictor for risk of repeat offense. The odds ratio for risk of repeat offense in foster care was 17.9 ($<0.05$) as compared with two-parent homes. The recidivism rate was 1 of 32 (3%) for the T-BOPP group and 37 of 102 (36%) for the noT-BOPP group (adjusted odds ratio, 0.02; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: When compared with the noT-BOPP group, T-BOPP participants had essentially no recidivism. The financial impact of arson behavior was over $6,000 per incident. The implementation of a juvenile firesetting prevention program has demonstrable benefits to the participants and society.

Key Words: Firesetting, Arson, Firesetters, Burn, Recidivism.
Program Outcomes

Do Burn Centers Provide Juvenile Firesetter Intervention?

Karla S. Ahrens-Klas, BSN, RN, Wendy L. Wahl, MD, FACS, Mark R. Hemmila, MD, FACS, Stewart C. Wang, MD, PhD

Juvenile firesetting activity accounts for a significant number of annual injuries and property damage, yet there is spar...
Program Outcomes

Barriers:

- Awareness: High rate recidivism -- Importance of research-based YFS intervention!
- Family, home, and school environment + Transient
- Child characteristics: ADHD, ACE’s, poor social skills, lack of support, etc.
- Stakeholder turn-over
- Unique behavior: Why choose fire?