

***Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program***  
***Strategic Conference Proceedings***  
***March 22-23, 2002***

**INTRODUCTION**

In an attempt to mount a cohesive national effort to reduce the problem of juvenile-set fires, it is important to develop both a strategic plan as well as secure adequate funding to implement the plan.

In March of 2002, the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM), with the assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), set about to develop just such a plan.

As a first step, NASFM conducted a yearlong, comprehensive research program on the key issues surrounding juvenile firesetting. The Association established five teams of experts to investigate seven discrete issues:

- Psychological Dimensions
- Sociological Dimensions
- Home Environment Factors
- Review and Evaluation of Social Services Available
- Review and Evaluation of Product Safety Enhancements
- Review of Existing Intervention Programs
- Review of Law Enforcement Issues

This effort produced over 800 pages of research on juvenile firesetting intervention issues. One consistent concern throughout most of that research was the lack of a comprehensive national approach to intervention and prevention of the problem.<sup>1</sup> Following is a description of the effort undertaken by NASFM to produce a comprehensive plan addressing juvenile firesetting, as well as the resulting plan.

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<sup>1</sup> A CD-ROM of the research summary reports is available from the National Association of State Fire Marshals, and can be ordered at [www.firemarshals.org](http://www.firemarshals.org)

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The purpose of the National Association of State Fire Marshals' Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Conference, held March 22-23, 2002, was to reach consensus on a national strategic plan to reduce the number of fires set by juveniles. This was to be accomplished in several steps by the Conference participants, who represented a full range of community and national expertise considered necessary to address the problem.

The first step was to review and evaluate all the research on juvenile firesetting compiled to date, including the recent NASFM research effort and its summary report, which addressed several aspects of the problem. Conferees were asked to become familiar with the NASFM research reports and other pertinent research prior to arriving at the Conference and with the intent of arriving at a consensus on conclusions and direction.

The second step was to develop a consensus list of future national actions that, in the judgment of the participants, were needed to reduce the number of fires set by juveniles.

The third step was to identify the most logical and achievable method of implementing the plan.

NASFM, with the assistance of the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, convened a conference of intervention practitioners, fire and law enforcement officials, mental health specialists, sociologists and social workers, government health specialists, youth safety education specialists and members of local SafeKids coalitions. This group brought the experience of their varied backgrounds and expertise together and worked for two days to reach a general consensus on the critical elements of an effective plan. They also determined which of the several communities represented would be the most appropriate to undertake and implement each of the chosen elements.

## **METHODOLOGY & PROCESS**

As a foundation for the two-day sessions, NASFM drew from the methodologies used at a 1999 Conference called *Solutions 2000*. Starting with introductory presentations that summarized current activities and research, NASFM used small groups to assess the research and recommend conclusions. After each breakout session, the summary elements of the small group breakout discussions were deliberated by the full Conference with an eye toward reaching a consensus on the recommendations as well as the group conclusions.

Initially, the Conferees were separated by discipline into small groups. They were then asked to develop a full list of their perceptions about the juvenile firesetting problem. For example, social service personnel were grouped with other social service workers; mental health workers with other mental health workers, etc. They would discuss their own perceptions of the juvenile firesetter problem to clarify their understandings. Then, in the general session, with all various disciplines present, perceptions of each individual group were discussed until all groups reached general consensus on the various aspects of the juvenile firesetting problem.

Next, the participants again were broken into small, but this time interdisciplinary groups. Each mixed group was asked to develop a list of the actions needed to mitigate the problem, as the group perceived it. Following the small group exercises, each group reported its conclusions to the general session with all disciplines present in an effort to reach general group consensus. Finally, in general session, the participants focused on the development of an overall national strategy, integrating all the elements and perspectives of the problem that had been raised in earlier sessions.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Discussions focused on the topics that participants felt were most relevant to any national effort to resolve or mitigate juvenile firesetting. These general topics and the participants' consensus perceptions are discussed below.

### **Legislation and Funding**

Legislation and funding must be addressed if the intervention efforts are to be institutionalized. It was agreed that NASFM's legislative committee could serve as the catalyst by providing needed leadership, helping to build coalitions and drafting the necessary proposals. In addition, NASFM's current legislative efforts, with an engineered solutions approach to furniture and mattresses fires, was seen as providing an added impetus to securing necessary legislation to institutionalize juvenile intervention programs.

It is also important that other national fire service groups refocus their attention to the seriousness of the juvenile firesetter problem. Coalitions must be built to educate society about the problem and its consequences and to gain support for implementing solutions. Hospitals and health professionals, police and juvenile justice groups, mental health counselors and the professional groups that represent them can all create effective coalitions that can affect legislation and funding. Some examples include the American Psychological Association and the National Association of Social Workers, along with the several fire service organizations.

Model state legislation is also needed to focus resources and efforts on institutionalizing state and local intervention programs. Currently, some intervention programs are implemented by caring individuals, who understand the seriousness of juvenile firesetting, and the value of intervening in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, unless key agencies and institutions grasp the importance of these programs, the programs ultimately cease to exist. This problem occurs at both the state and local government levels.

Conference participants agreed that, at the federal level, FEMA and the Department of Justice should allocate a greater percentage of their funding to juvenile firesetting intervention efforts. Juvenile firesetting represents a significant portion of the intentionally set fires, and only greater intervention efforts can ultimately prevent future fires and reduce the need for greater suppression investments.

An additional legislative need identified by the participants was the linking of data systems. Currently, the National Fire Incident Reporting System, state burn reporting laws, uniform crime reports by police agencies and child protection data systems are not compatible with each other. Linkages would facilitate the tracking of incident types as well as the children involved in setting such fires.

Finally, the participants identified the need for legislation covering school and campus environments, where a substantial amount of juvenile firesetting takes place. With intentionally set fires as the number one cause of fires in these environments, the participants agreed that mandatory reporting of all school fires; mandatory inspections of school and campus occupancies; and training for counselors, resident assistants and maintenance workers were all serious legislative needs.

Participants also identified several funding sources, all of which had some compelling basis for helping to resolve the nation's juvenile firesetter problem.

- HUD: Safety of residents of public housing and fire reporting
- CDC: Mission to reduce the injury to children, the victims of these behaviors
- DOJ: Arson is a major component of crime (juvenile justice, terror)
- HSS: Prevention of injury caused by juvenile firesetters
- FEMA: Primary agency for reducing all fires nationwide

Legislation directing these agencies to include the reduction of juvenile firesetting behaviors as part of their mission would increase awareness of the problem within each agency. Such legislation would also elevate juvenile firesetting intervention programs to a higher priority level within each agency, which would, in turn, demand the allocation of greater resources.

### **Research: The Incident**

Data and research drives our understanding of the juvenile firesetter problem. There was universal agreement at the Conference on the dearth of current research and the critical need for additional research in several specific areas in order to come to a greater, more in-depth understanding of the problem.

The lack of data regarding the incidents of juvenile firesetting inhibits our understanding of the scope and pervasiveness of the problem. Many jurisdictions are not collecting even minimal data on the nature of the incidents, items first ignited, ignition tools or ages of the firesetters and their participating friends. Detailed incident descriptions, as well as comprehensive collection systems are primary areas of need. Widespread use by the fire service of the comprehensive juvenile firesetter module of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) could assist greatly in filling this need. In addition, funding support to state and local fire departments would insure greater participation by states and local communities in the NFIRS program. Lacking any improvement in the use of the NFIRS system, the development of a self-contained juvenile firesetting data capture system should be developed to gather the critical data needed to better understand the problem.

Conference attendees also agreed that there is a need for uniform reporting and definition of terms. The current lack of uniformity greatly hinders correlative studies with data from diverse geographic areas. While the incidents and the behaviors may be similar, studies are constrained by the difficulties in understanding and correlating written incident descriptions. This is another problem that greater participation in NFIRS and its juvenile firesetter modular report could help ameliorate.

Participants noted that there is no single location where data on juvenile-set fire incidents can be easily accessed. A focal point of data access would be helpful in facilitating research. Participants also expressed some concern regarding the quality of the incident data currently being collected. Many feel that current data is incomplete and is ill suited for its ultimate use.

In all, the lack of cohesive national data is a serious impediment to continued comprehensive research.

### **Research: The Behavior**

There is some general understanding of the behavioral motivations involved with juvenile firesetters. Curiosity, expressions of family dysfunction and cries for attention are some of the generally known motives. However, a more detailed understanding of the behaviors and their early warning signs are much less known.

A full range of clinical data gathering and investigative research of the juvenile firesetter's behavior is needed in order to better understand and mitigate the problem. In addition, successful intervention strategies must be investigated in order to determine the reasons for their success as well as to determine the connection, if any, between early firesetting behaviors and later adolescent deviant behaviors.

An effort to standardize terminology that describes both incident and behavioral characteristics would be advantageous to a multi-jurisdictional approach to this research work. The development of a uniform, web-based data collection system would also be helpful in studying data gathered from geographically diverse areas.

Research on these issues would drive more successful intervention strategies and possibly set the stage for more effective follow-up with juvenile clients.

## **GENERAL AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM**

Awareness of the juvenile firesetter problem, among both the public and the professional groups who are a necessary part of the solution, is limited. Many parents, and some professionals, see juvenile firesetting as normal curiosity-inspired behavior with little societal impact. Mental health counselors, social service workers, educators and some fire service personnel share this view. However, these behaviors often lead to tragic consequences such as injury, death and economic loss. And, if unaddressed, juvenile firesetter behaviors may continue and manifest in other forms as the juveniles move into adolescence and adulthood.

Conference participants agreed that greater efforts are needed to increase problem awareness among several target audiences. Parents and caregivers topped the list of groups that should be targeted. The list also included day care workers and elementary level educators as well as social agency personnel from such groups as the scouts, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and religious organizations that assist children. Additional target audiences included personnel from professional groups such as public health workers and clinicians, EMS personnel, legislators, insurance industry attorneys and members of the judiciary.

The Conference participants cautioned that awareness messages should be carefully prepared in order to avoid further fragmentation of the groups and coalitions needed to address the problem of juvenile firesetting. Messages should be designed to encourage and strengthen coordination among the agencies and groups that are vital to successful intervention efforts. Messages should also be tailored to address the motivational concerns of the targeted groups. In other words, these groups must understand how the problem of firesetting affects them in particular, and how their participation in solving the problem is consistent with the group's primary mission.

### **“WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?”**

The final sessions of the Conference were devoted to such questions as “Where do we go from here?” and “How do we get there?” as well as “Who is going make the effort to take us there?”

The participants found that answers to these and similar questions were neither simple nor easy, but all agreed that something must be done to preserve the nation’s most precious and valuable resources – our children – and their, as well as our, future.

Participants articulated the urgency of the issue and, above all, agreed that efforts to address juvenile firesetting must be started immediately, even though there may not be universal agreement on the optimal approach. Even with imperfect data, it is becoming clearer that the enormity of the problem must be controlled as quickly as possible. Anecdotally, it is said that some communities are experiencing juvenile firesetting in as much as 50-60 percent of their structure fires. This does not include juvenile involvement in trash and other outdoor fires. The use of fire by some juveniles to satisfy their curiosity or to garner attention for themselves or their circumstances can no longer be brushed aside as acceptable childlike behavior. To those who work in this arena, the impact on society is becoming quite apparent.

On the other hand, participants recognized that it would not be easy to quickly mobilize agencies and governments – or to initiate and institutionalize intervention programs on a widespread basis. It was acknowledged, however, that undertaking this effort is equally as important as developing the precise intervention efforts that the programs would initially embrace.

## **THE PLAN**

Following is a summary of what the participants expressed to be the vital elements of a successful plan to mitigate and resolve the problem of juvenile firesetting in America. The elements include legislation, funding, research and awareness. The resultant plan is organized around these main issues, the contents of which achieved general group consensus.

### **LEGISLATION**

The participants saw the NASFM legislative committee as a solid resource to contribute to the legislative effort. Considering that protecting its citizens is the primary role of government, participants agreed that NASFM's established leadership role in the legislative arena would assist greatly in institutionalizing programs of Juvenile Firesetting Intervention. Also, the Association's assistance in developing model state legislation and supporting federal legislation could provide a foundation for continual effort in this area.

NASFM, as an organization, could also assist in building partnerships and coalitions with other disciplines and other fire service organizations to increase the visibility of the problem. In addition, NASFM's previous success in generating federal funding support for intervention efforts could provide a national focus for greater federal investment in resolving the problem. With NASFM's help, specific earmarked funding for local juvenile firesetting intervention teams could become a reality.

The participants agreed that juvenile firesetting intervention needs a national focus for legislative matters, and that NASFM's legislative expertise and resources make it the best organization to provide such a focus. They agreed that NASFM is the appropriate organization to propose nation-wide mandatory fire reporting legislation, which should include a uniform instrument for collecting and reporting juvenile firesetting activity.

### **FUNDING**

Ongoing funding is a perplexing issue. Many participants agreed that funding is generally dependent on other factors such as the direct relation of juvenile firesetting to an agency's primary mission, an awareness and definition of the problem, and an understanding of the seriousness of juvenile firesetting.

Participants also agreed that continuous and adequate funding, commensurate with problem definition, did not necessarily mean new sources of additional dollars. In some

cases, modest investments could leverage substantial amounts of existing dollars that could be used in multiple ways to increase juvenile firesetter intervention efforts in communities and also permit modest expansion of local activities.

In addition, there are federal agencies and national non-profit groups, currently working to mitigate child death and injuries, whose existing resources and efforts could, with active coordination, be integrated into local juvenile firesetter intervention efforts. For example, the Center for Disease Control invests large sums in the prevention of child injuries and deaths, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development invests heavily in maintaining the safety and security of the children who occupy the public housing units they administer. In addition, the Department of Justice invests substantial dollars in the prevention of juvenile and adolescent crimes, and the National SafeKids program is fully dedicated to preventing accidental childhood injuries. All of these agencies and departments must dedicate a portion of their existing resources to help control the serious social problem of juvenile firesetting.

Local government agencies that provide services to children, could, with active coordination, integrate their efforts into other local juvenile firesetting intervention efforts. For example, social service programs could assist local firesetter intervention teams where a child's behavior is precipitated by a dysfunctional family situation. Mental health agencies could provide appropriate child counseling services when needed by local intervention teams, and juvenile justice agencies and schools could provide educational assistance to children both before and after firesetting events.

As the problem of juvenile firesetting has been increasing over the years, there has been a consistent lack of even modest funding for local intervention teams to coordinate the efforts of partner agencies. Given modest resources, local governments could establish local intervention programs that would coordinate existing child services, mental health services, and educational and juvenile justice dollars in ways that would expand the effectiveness of existing investments.

The immediate need, which will enormously benefit local intervention programs, is the modest investment of dollars to effectively coordinate existing child-service work and expenditures so that the local juvenile firesetting intervention programs can share in the benefits of existing investments.

## **RESEARCH**

Extensive discussions in a number of small-group sessions led to the identification of four specific research initiatives.

### **1. Develop a uniform, comprehensive data collection system**

It was generally agreed that NASFM should take the lead in developing a simple-to-use data collection form:

- To capture information about children who are engaged in fireplay,
- To encourage local fire departments to systematically collect such information about all fires started by children, and
- To provide a centralized data collection repository where individual fire departments could store and access their own data and from which aggregate reports by state or across all states could be generated.

Development of an Internet-based system would be ideal.

Currently, no national data about children who start fires are available. The National Fire Incident Reporting System has only recently included a limited section on the children who start fires. Included is information about age, gender, race/ethnicity, family type, motivation and disposition. The choices among motivational factors are quite limited.

The more detailed profiles of the children who start fires presently come from a very small number of cities that have independently collected such data as well as a relatively small number of clinical studies that primarily describe children in care for mental illness. The cities who collect these data use similar but not identical data forms, and there is currently no mechanism to aggregate the data from the various cities who collect it.

Many clinical studies do not examine representative groups of children, and only those children who are referred to and then actually participate in the programs are included. This leaves unanswered questions about who gets referred to these programs and why, and whether or not the pictures developed from these select groups of children are representative of the majority of children who set fires. Both anecdotal reports from program coordinators and comparisons of large surveys and small clinical studies suggest that many of the children who play with fire and who start fires either are not referred to or choose not to participate in these studies.

## **2. Conduct basic research on children's fireplay and firesetting.**

A better understanding of children's fireplay and firesetting needs to be developed. Our current prevention and intervention efforts are based on the individual experience of fire education and prevention specialists in communities around the country. Their collective wisdom has not been adequately tested by systematic research. We need to know if our advice is appropriate and likely to make a difference.

For example, everyone tells parents to put matches and lighters away. This is judged to be an obvious truth. If children can't get to matches and lighters, they can't use them to start fires. So, this advice certainly cannot do any harm.

But is it *effective* advice? If the majority of parents of children who start fires simply left matches and lighters out all the time, and no child had to exert any effort to get them, this advice might have a substantial impact. But, it is more likely that most parents do put matches and lighters away and that our attention should be directed to more selective groups of parents. One obvious group includes parents of adventurous, active and mischievous children who manage to obtain matches and lighters in spite of their parents' best efforts. These children are smart and patient enough to wait for their parents to become engaged in some distracting activity. Only when Dad goes outside to mow the lawn and Mom goes to the basement to start the laundry do the children quickly and quietly climb up on the counter, reach in the cupboard and get what they want, perhaps cookies or candy, perhaps lighters or matches. For such children, a simple request that parents "put matches out of site and out of reach" is inadequate. A more elaborate strategy is needed.

Another group that may require a more directed and specific strategy is made up of households where matches are accessible all the time – this often includes very stressed individuals, people who smoke or drink or parents with very poor parenting skills. The simple advice to "put matches away" is unlikely to have any effect on such parents. Instead, they may require a more targeted, extensive intervention directed at a wider range of parenting skills.

Such distinctions are important, because the easy approaches to fire prevention have been exhausted. Overall, fires started by children are down. In fact, the number of fires started by children has been reduced by over two-thirds since 1980, when the NFPA (write out) started collecting data. Unfortunately, though, the number of injuries and deaths attributable to these fires has been reduced only slightly. We are now faced with a more serious and more difficult challenge. We need a better understanding of the problem if we are going to continue to make progress, especially given the limited resources available.

### **3. Evaluate interventions developed for children who play with or start fires.**

Many cities have developed intervention programs, but very few of these programs have been systematically evaluated. Currently, there is only one published evaluation (by David Kolko<sup>2</sup>) of a fire safety education program. It demonstrates that fire safety education delivered by firefighters can effectively reduce repeat firesetting, but only if the firefighters are carefully selected and trained. Also, the program must address both children as well as their parents using a curriculum that teaches skills and employs active teaching methods such as role-playing. Finally, the firefighters must be given sufficient resources to conduct eight one-hour sessions. It is not yet known whether this is the only effective approach, but the traditional two visits by a fire educator has not proven to be effective. There may be other approaches, but the critical elements have not yet been identified. It may be possible to achieve the desired effect in fewer sessions with somewhat less training, but this has not yet been determined.

It is not acceptable to merely “do something.” This wastes valuable resources and creates a false sense of security. In fact, it is possible that some programs actually create unintended, undesirable outcomes. For example, many fire departments work with several children at one time and have developed what are referred to as “fire schools.” There is evidence to suggest, however, that working with conduct-disordered children in small groups can be counterproductive. The children learn not only from the instructor, but also from the other children. Their fellow students are important sources of information about risky behavior and provide unintended reinforcement. Group interventions with children who start fires need to be carefully evaluated for unintended effects.

### **4. Evaluate community programs.**

A community’s ability to effectively reduce the incidence of fireplay and firesetting as well as the rate of repeat firesetting depends on the overall community response. A community can have a very successful individual program; but, if only a small fraction of those referred actually participate in the program, the overall benefits will be quite limited. Since participation in most programs is voluntary, this is frequently a problem.

More importantly, any single program will be appropriate for only a portion of the children who engage in fireplay or firesetting in a community. Educational programs will be most effective for those who are motivated by what has traditionally been called curiosity. But some families will need more formal, and more extensive, mental health or counseling interventions. Other families will require legal interventions by community

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<sup>2</sup> Kolko, D. (2001). Efficacy of Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment and Fire Safety Education for Children Who Set Fires: Initial and Follow-up Outcomes, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*. Vol. 42, No. 3, 359-369.

departments of child and family services. Still other families will require legal interventions by law enforcement agencies or family court. The efficiency with which families are referred to the appropriate agency, the communication between agencies to ensure that families are being followed and the rates of participation in these programs all influence the overall success of the community's fire prevention efforts. Evaluations of comprehensive community efforts are essential. Such evaluations address issues of communication and coordination rather than the content of individual programs and will better help identify and describe effective program models.

## **AWARENESS**

Members of the public and, in many cases, professionals are unaware of the prevalence and serious nature of juvenile firesetting. Current statistics show that 44 percent of middle school students in the United States have played with matches or lighters within the past year.<sup>3</sup>

What is needed is a plan to increase public awareness and change attitudes regarding juvenile firesetting behavior. It was the participants' contention that the best way to accomplish this is to focus on two separate components:

- Prevention (helping children refrain from playing with and setting fires), and
- Intervention (providing educational and counseling intervention to children who have been identified as juvenile firesetters).

The group consensus also indicated that there are key groups to receive information in an awareness campaign:

- Professionals – those who are key stakeholders in the issue. They include fire service personnel, mental health professionals, educators, public health workers, police officers, members of the insurance industry and legislators.
- General Public – those who have frequent contact with children. They include parents, grandparents, daycare providers as well as organized groups such as scouting organizations, sports teams and religious groups.

The group discussions also focused on the methods that could be used to gain support for an awareness campaign. With the professionals, it is recommended that a national campaign is necessary in order to:

- Increase the awareness of the issues by professionals,

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<sup>3</sup> Simonsen, B. & Bullis, M (2001). Fire Interest Survey: Final Report. Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, College of Education, University of Oregon. Unpublished Manuscript].

- Convince the stakeholders that their help is needed with disseminating information, training, and support, and
- Convince the stakeholders of the ways in which their participation will benefit their groups and organizations directly.

The general public could be motivated to participate in other ways, including the following personal and societal benefits:

- Decreased injuries and deaths,
- Decreased property damage, and
- Decreased insurance losses, which may have driven up costs.

The participants' considered the following factors necessary to successfully delivering information and increasing awareness.

- Develop a national identity. Select a name (other than juvenile firesetters) that will identify the nature of the program and provide instant recognition. Name recognition will bestow credibility upon the program and may encourage compliance with recommendations.
- Develop a universal language with standard terminology. This will increase ease of information/resource sharing. Select a term that is more easily recognizable than "juvenile firesetter." Many laypeople do not appear to be familiar with this term, and those who are seem to believe that it only applies to pathological firesetters (those with malicious intent), although it actually applies to all juveniles who misuse fire.
- Link this program with other successful programs. This information can be presented with other fire safety information. For example, The ASK Program (AskingSavesKids) encourages parents to inquire about the presence of an unsecured or loaded firearm before sending a child to play at someone's house. At the same time, parents can inquire about the presence of matches/lighters.
- Prepare "canned" programs describing the issues, for use by anyone who is in a position to provide education. Include cultural and gender diversity issues when choosing speakers, concepts and delivery of message; prepare a standard curriculum; and develop the program in several formats that can be easily adapted for use such as video, CD-ROM, downloadable information, etc.

- Add a juvenile firesetting component to certification and scholar programs, which requires continuing education, certification or licensing (i.e., educators, daycare providers, religious leaders, nurses, emergency medical service workers, coaches, mental health workers, firefighters and law enforcement personnel).
- Prepare industry-wide warnings such as those that the Surgeon General promotes on the health risks of cigarette smoking.
- Select a national spokesperson. Ron Howard was suggested due to his involvement with the movie *Backdraft*. The spotlight is already on him for recent work, and he has universal respect as a result.
- Determine which groups might be interested in forming partnerships to confront the problem of juvenile firesetting. They can include: International Association of Arson Investigators; National SAFE KIDS Campaign; National Fire Protection Association; American Burn Association; International Association of Fire Fighters; International Association of Fire Chiefs; and Internet service providers.
- Develop a website. The website should include downloadable public service announcements, downloadable articles for inclusion in newsletters and training venues, links to local juvenile firesetter intervention programs, a professional discussion group; an “ask the expert” section for laypeople and links to additional resources.
- Select a slogan. Some examples include: “Matches and lighters are hazardous to your children’s health,” “Talk to your children about playing with fire,” and “Do you know where your matches and lighters are? Your children do.”
- Develop a national clearinghouse to include data, referrals to professional personnel who specialize in this subject, with material that is available for use in programs.
- Incorporate juvenile firesetting information into national awareness campaigns. For example, the theme for NFPA Fire Prevention Week 2003 could be juvenile firesetter-related issues.
- Ensure that a professional approach is used with media relations and products that are developed.
- Incorporate a couple of juvenile-firesetter-identification questions into interviews in locations that already use interviews, such as emergency rooms and juvenile detention centers.

Finally, the participants agreed that management of a national program must be centered in an oversight agency that has the ability to support and augment teams that are acting as liaisons to public and professional groups. In addition, the agency must be capable of overseeing a universal approach to juvenile firesetting programs and must have the ability to evaluate effective juvenile firesetting intervention programs and determine what is successful, and what is not.