



State of Iowa Juvenile Fire Intervention Program Program Delivery SOG

Date: January 2019

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PURPOSE:

This regulation establishes the responsibilities of the State of Iowa's Juvenile Fire Intervention Program and its staff. This State program will provide a cohesive partnership among the communities and Fire Dept's to reduce the number of fire injuries and deaths, by providing evaluation, education, and redirection assistance to the children who exhibit fire setting behavior at no cost to the families affected.

With the adoption of NFPA1035 Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I by Iowa's State Fire Marshals Office, personnel certified to this standard need to follow specified guidelines when working with juvenile firesetters and their families.

SCOPE:

This standard operating guideline applies to the entire State of Iowa's JFSI program, its partners and staff, including Fire Prevention Specialists (FPS) who are certified as a Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I & II.

Those not certified to the standard can do one of the following: 1) Coordinate services for the family either through his/her District Coordinator, 2) The local firesetter intervention network or 3) Refer the family to the nearest department with certified personnel per the State of Iowa's JFSI Regional Map or 211Iowa.org.

POLICY:

Establishes a consistent procedure for the referral of youth age 17 and under who have misused fire or show an unsafe interest in fire. The entire program staff will operate as a **team** with the purpose of providing the highest quality of education and intervention to families of fire setters in order to help these children cease their unsafe behavior.

DEFINITIONS:

Juvenile Firesetter:

A youth under the age of 18 who has misused matches, lighters or fireworks, or who has started a fire in an unsafe and unsupervised manner.



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Referral Sources:

Parent or guardian, juvenile intervention specialists, law enforcement officers, community mental health providers, educators, or school counselors, private providers or other community partners working with youths who send youth to the fire departments for screening or education.

Firesetter Intervention Coalition:

A multi-disciplinary team with representatives from the fire service, law enforcement, juvenile justice, Department of Human Services, Schools, Private Industry etc. These coalitions addresses juvenile firesetter behavior through intervention, education, restitution and treatment of youths who have started fires.

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist:

This is a certification issued by the National Fire Academy or its certified trainers/agencies. Standards in training which specify the knowledge, skills and performance requirements to perform juvenile assessments and intakes. This certification meets the intervention specialist standards recommended by NFPA 1035. Intervention Specialists will be primarily responsible for scheduling, conducting classes, providing education via email or face to face, referrals and performing interventions. He/she will assist with special projects and initiatives as recommended by the RC of their region.

Screening/Intake:

This is the first step in an assessment process. It consists of a simple set of questions about the fire incident and results in a decision to educate or refer the youth and family for further more intensive evaluation. The Oregon *Juveniles With Fire* screening tool will be used as the standard form for all Iowa intakes.

Educational Intervention:

Provides the youth and family with specific information regarding fire science, fire survival and fire prevention. It also includes helping the youth become aware of the social, financial and emotional consequences of their fire. Recommended educational materials are available through your RC.

Referral:

A recommendation to the family to seek other community services for assistance with dealing with the firesetting behavior.

Mandatory Reporter:

Firefighters are required by state law to notify law enforcement or Iowa DHS if there is reason to suspect abuse or neglect.

Regional Coordinator:

Personnel trained to the **Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist II** level, per National Fire Academy Standard assigned to function as the lead contact and administrator of a particular state region. The RC will be



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responsible for handling initial information gathering from the referral source. RC's will also be called upon to assist in grant writing and regional projects as deemed necessary. The RC will be responsible for maintaining and establishing relationships with other organizations and agencies in the community and will represent their region on all committees. He/she will also be responsible for evaluating the program needs and starting any new initiatives or needed changes to the program or program's policies. He/she will be responsible for evaluating the performance of assigned personnel to Iowa's *Juvenile Fire Intervention Program*. The RC will also assist in scheduling, conducting classes and performing follow-up interviews.

Iowa Fire Bridge Tracking System:

Data Entry System used by Iowa State Fire Marshal's Office for JFI Program activity tracking as well as NFIRS reporting

PROCEDURE:

Youth age 3-17 identified as misusing fire

1. Juvenile is involved in fire
2. Fire Chief/Official calls 2-1-1 or goes to 211Iowa.org and gets email of Regional Coordinator
3. Chief/Official emails Regional Coordinator with info of JFI case
4. Regional Coordinator refers case to their closest active program
5. JFI Intervention Specialist makes initial contact with family/Completes a phone interview and triage
6. Intervention Specialist Decision—1. Age Specific Education ONLY or 2. Face to Face meeting is needed
7. Conduct interview using Oregon's *Juvenile with Fire* screening tool
8. After scoring interview referrals made to detention, counseling, in-patient mental health etc.
9. Intervention Specialist goes to 211Iowa.org to search for their regions mental health providers and makes referral
10. Intervention Specialist enters statistical data into Iowa's Fire Bridge for state wide data tracking and grant use

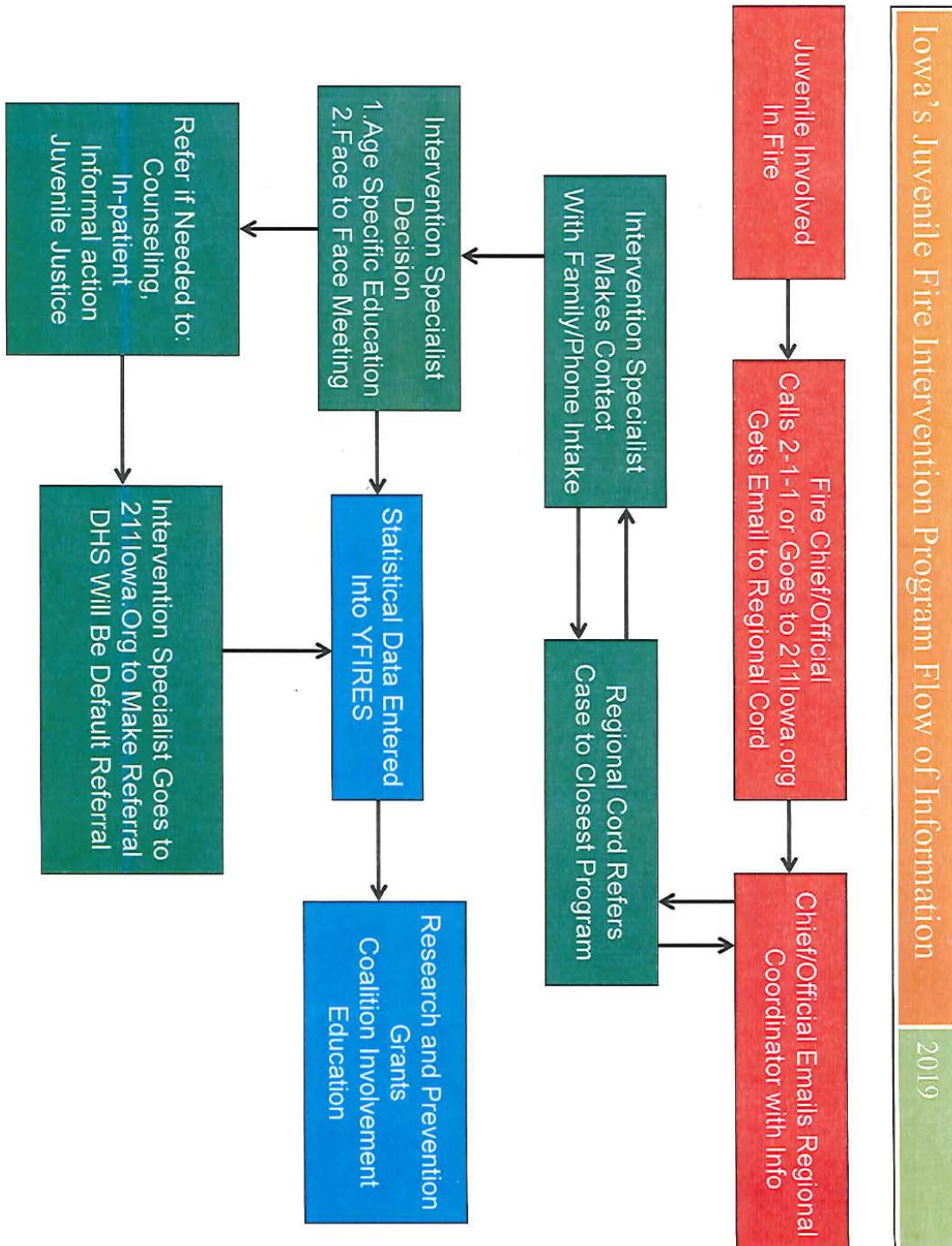
(Please refer to Iowa's JFI flow chart for detail of information flow)



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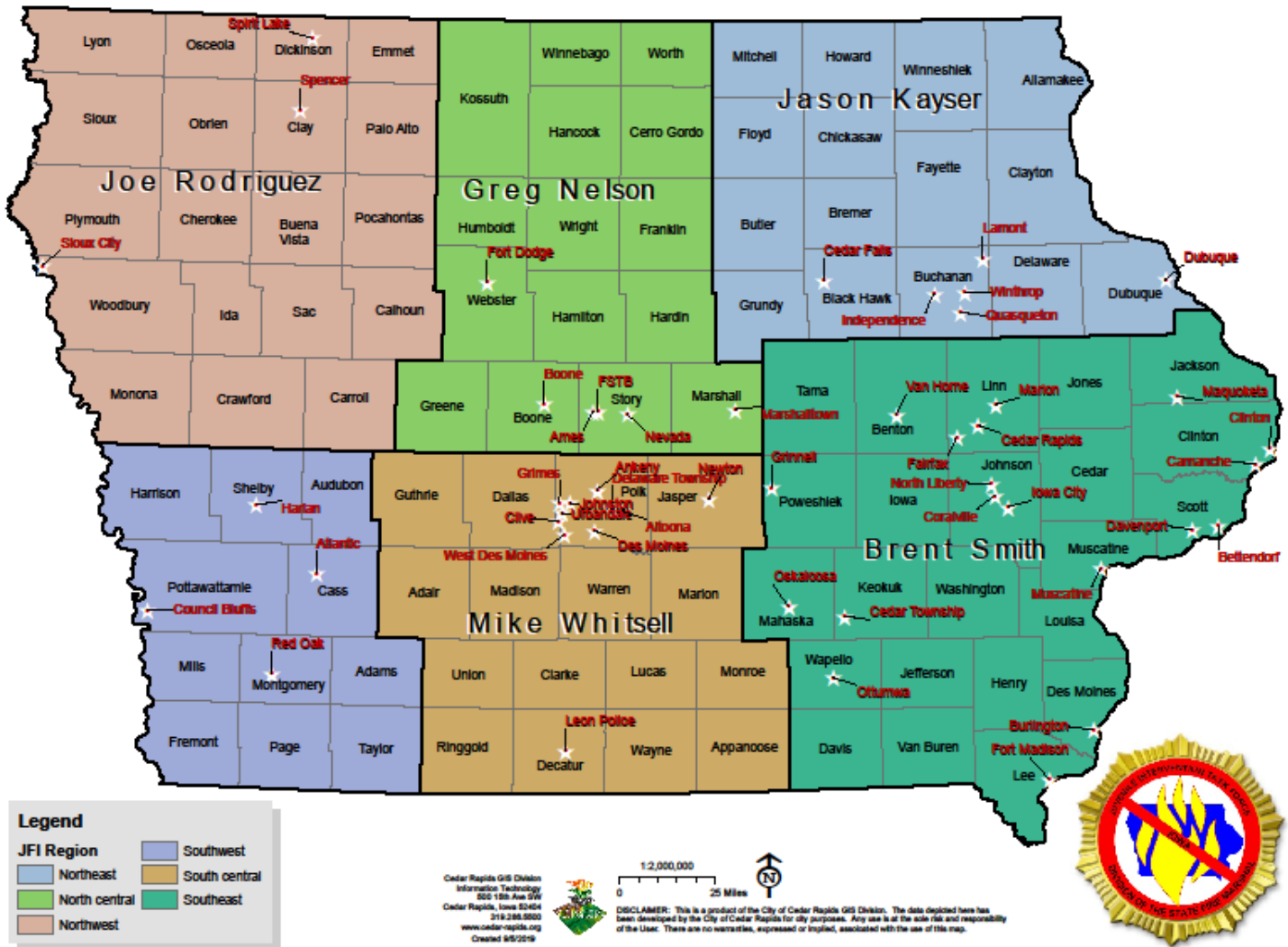


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Iowa's JFI Programs



Procedure when a parent or guardian requests juvenile firesetter intervention.

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I shall explain the purpose and process of screening and educational intervention.



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Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I shall complete the *Oregon Juvenile with Fire Screening Tool*.

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I shall offer educational intervention, which includes fire survival and prevention (see materials list or a CD of recommended materials available from the Regional Coordinators).

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I may refer the family for other community services, if needed by using 211Iowa.org.

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I shall complete data entry into the State of Iowa's tracking system by using Iowa's Fire Bridge System.

Processing Referrals

The initial contact for a referral should go through the Regional Coordinator. Upon receiving a referral, check to ensure that all pertinent information is made available (names, phone numbers, age, address and details about the fire). PLEASE USE THE STATE OF IOWA'S INTAKE FORM. Referrals should only be accepted from law enforcement agencies (arson bureaus, fire marshal and fire departments, police agencies and juvenile justice), and entities that have **legal custody over the child** (child protective services, parents, foster parents, residential treatment centers and schools). Persons who are not part of a law enforcement agency and do not have any legal custody rights over the child (i.e. neighbors or parents of other referred children) and who would like to refer a child, should be asked to have the legal guardian of the child contact the JFI program.

*If more than one juvenile was involved in the fire setting, then a referral for each child should be made separately.

The case will then be assigned by the Regional Coordinator to the closest Intervention Specialist and active program.

All attempts to contact the family, conversations with the family, classes and contact with other agencies about the child or case should be noted in the child's file.

Contacting the Family

If a family has not responded to phone calls, a letter will be sent telling the family about the program and the importance of obtaining intervention for this behavior. Even if the residence was burned-out or no longer occupied by the family, a letter should be sent in hopes of a forwarding address having been left with the postal service.

If the family does not respond to the letter within a reasonable amount of time and/or if the letter is returned undelivered, then a letter detailing the attempts to contact the family will be sent to the referring agent. All attempts to contact each family will be noted on each child's file.



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Scheduling the Family for Face to Face Screening

When setting an appointment, explain to the parent or guardian what the class will include (interviews, games, decision making skill lessons, videos, etc.), the estimated duration of the meeting and that the program is confidential and does not create a criminal record for the child. Also provide the family with the program's phone number in case they have any questions or need to cancel. At this time, also make sure that the parent or guardian understands that a parent or guardian is required to be present at the class.

Conducting the Screening

Families who are more than twenty minutes late will need to be rescheduled for another appointment unless the staff decides otherwise to minimize disruption of staffing apparatus.

Staff should explain to the parents and to the children what the class would include, as well as explaining to the child the purpose of the class is because everyone is concerned about his/her fire setting and would like to see that he/she does not play with fire again.

The option of having a referral for counseling with a mental health provider should also be explained and that the staff will also give recommendation on whether counseling will be provided after the evaluations are complete. The parents should be asked if they have any questions. The waiver giving the program permission to conduct the meeting and releasing the program from any liability if the child should return to setting fires should be explained to the parents and then the parents should be asked to sign it. Staff should ensure that the family understands that the program does not promise to "cure" the child of his/her fire setting behavior.

If the child is on probation, required to participate by a school and/or if the parents wish to have the child referred for counseling or have the information from the class shared with anyone, the parents will have to initial on the waiver who the information can be shared with on the waiver. Again the parents and child should be asked if they have any questions before they are interviewed.

If the child being interviewed is the opposite sex of the interviewer, it is recommended that a biological parent remain within sight of the interview for the safety of the staff's reputation. If the child has a known history of sexual abuse, it is also recommended that the child to be interviewed with the door open for the protection of the staff. A staff member should not interview a child alone if for any reason the staff member feels uncomfortable with the situation. **The safety of the staff and the protection of the staff's reputations take priority over completing an intervention.**



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If the child is young and does not feel comfortable being separated from the parent, the staff may try doing the educational activities for the child with the parent present first. If the child cannot understand the questions, an evaluation may not be possible and information should be obtained from the parent(s). Some children may also require breaks in the interview with activities due to short attention span. Flexibility in doing the evaluations is often needed, and based on the staff's decisions. Sometimes an evaluation may not be conducted and only the education will be possible.

Based on the evaluation and/or the staff's decisions, activities appropriate for the child's maturity and learning level will be conducted with the child usually after the interview. Young children as well as older children who show difficulty in reading and writing can be encouraged to draw out the events of their fire setting for the evaluation and the educational activities instead of attempting to write. The parents will be informed about the different types of firesetters after their interview so they can understand why the interview was conducted and the progression in fire setting behavior that the program is trying to prevent.

After completing these components, the parent(s) and child will be brought back together to discuss what the child did in his/her class. An educational video or activity will be done with the parent and child followed by discussion. Often it is recommended to provide the family with fire safety homework that is appropriate for the child's learning level (checking the smoke alarms once a month, checking for hazards in the home, etc.). If the family is not brought in for a face to face meeting, the Intervention Specialist will provide the family with educational material of their choice to be sent via email if possible, for the child to complete and have sent back in a timely manner.

If the family is in need of a smoke alarm and is economically deprived, the Intervention Specialist can refer the family to the appropriate Smoke Alarm Program.

The staff may be able to give a recommendation for counseling at that time or they can call the family with their recommendation after the staff has had time to discuss and complete the evaluations. If counseling is recommended, the family can either obtain the counseling and verify completion through the JFI and have the JFI note that fact in their final report to the referring agent or the JFI will send a recommendation for counseling to the referring agency for them to act upon. The Intervention Specialist can use 211Iowa.org to search for local participating mental health providers and may then make the referral through that established process.

Any materials given to the youth should be given with the explanation that the materials are to help them to remember their lessons and not rewards because they set a fire.

If the family requires a letter(s) showing that they participated in the program for juvenile probation, the Courts, schools, apartment complexes/housing, Child Protective Services or for any other entity, the letter can be provided at the end of the class if the parents have initialed for information to be shared with the entity(s) on the waiver form. If the family was uncooperative during the class this should be noted in the letter because merely attending the program does not mean completion of the education. If the letter is to juvenile probation or a



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school, the program staff will give one copy to the family and send another copy to the school or probation office. Copies of all letters should be maintained in the child's file with the program. Referrals to other social services can also be made to families and noted in the file. If a copy of the fire record is provided that should also be noted. Copies of the arson report **cannot** be provided. Copies of the Intervention Specialist report **cannot** be shared with arson investigation as this is a non-punitive program and must remain confidential.

An additional class may be recommended for youth who were not able to stay focused on the activities or seem unable to retain all of the lessons as well for any family that does not stay for the completion of the class.

Children, who admit to abuse not already documented, show signs of abuse or neglect or are threats to the safety of their siblings, will need to be reported to local Police and Child Protective Services (CPS). Families should not be informed that they would be reported because of the likelihood of confrontation or the family moving away before the proper authorities can investigate. If a parent or guardian calls complaining about being reported the staff should put the parent or guardian on speakerphone and try to have another staff member present to witness and record the conversation. Staff does not have to admit to making the report. Afterwards if threats to the staff were made then a report should be made to law enforcement and a report of this behavior should be made known to CPS. All reports to CPS and any following conversations with the family should be recorded in the child's file.

Things that should not be done by staff in the class include: making a false promise to the youth (i.e. promising a ride on a fire truck if they don't set any more fires), scaring the child (often youth set fires due to lack of control in their lives and scaring them only adds to lack of control), staff sharing their personal problems (empathizing with the family is recommended but unloading personal problems on the family is unethical), staff using other case information while telling the juvenile's names, staff inviting the family to be part of their personal life in any way (i.e. hiring the family for services, befriending or trying to personally help the family with their personal problems outside of the program), staff displaying or discussing any differing opinions or disagreements among themselves in front of families (unity among staff is important to the integrity of the program) and any other behavior that may seem questionable or unethical.

Staff should also maintain a professional demeanor and a level tone of speaking. If a family member becomes confrontational or uncontrollable then the class should be ended immediately and the Intervention Specialist leave or calmly asking the family to leave (if on department property) and additional staff members should be obtained to witness. Should this happen all witnessing staff members should document the events and conversations. Staff will not have to tolerate being yelled or cursed at or physically attacked by the children or the parents.

Referring Youth to Counseling



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The Intervention Specialist or Regional Coordinator will do the referral of youth to a mental health provider by using 211Iowa.org. The family must sign consent for information to be shared with the counseling agency while they are present at the JFI interview in order for a referral to be possible.

Youth on Probation:

Parents of youths, who are on probation, court ordered to attend the program and meet the requirements for financial assistance for a referral for counseling services, must sign consent for information to be shared with both the counseling agency and the probation office so the probation office can be notified if they are attending the program.

Referring Families to Other Social Services

Referrals to other social services may be made to help relieve stressors within the family such as agencies that may assist with rent, utilities, housing, etc. The families will be given the information about the organizations and they will be responsible for contacting these agencies. Program staff will make sure the family understands that neither the City, nor State, nor the program affiliates, endorses the agencies or are responsible for their services. Referrals for special circumstances should be made by the Regional Coordinator to ensure that the referral is appropriate using 211Iowa.org

Follow-up

Follow-ups with the families that have completed the program should be done within 45-60 days after completion of the program using the follow-up interview form. Follow-ups for youth who were referred to mental health provider will have follow-ups conducted after they have completed the counseling sessions or have been dropped from the counseling component. Follow-ups can be conducted over the phone or in person. It is understandable that many of the families will not be able to be contacted and that staff does not always have the resources or time to conduct all follow-ups on each child.

In the rare occurrence of a family being confrontational or threatening, staff does not have to conduct a follow-up with that family.

Once the family has had a follow-up conducted and the youth is reported to have no other incidences of fire setting then the file will be considered closed. If the family cannot be contacted for the follow-up due to a change of phone number or address, or due to two attempts to contact with no response, then the file will be closed.

Youth who are reported to continue with their fire setting behavior should be offered another class and/or encouraged to participate in counseling assistance part of the program with a mental health provider. Refusals of the family to participate in another class or to seek counseling should be noted.



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Data Entry into YFIRES

www.YFIRES.com