

What is Straight Talk?

- Straight Talk is nationally-acclaimed family-focused program for youth who have misused fire, such as: playing with matches or lighters, mimicking video games or online video fire tricks, using accelerants, setting fires, participating in online fire challenges, experimenting with fireworks or bottle bombs, pulling false fire alarms, etc. It is also for youth who are at risk for experimentation and/or who have observed others misusing fire (such as a sibling or a group of friends). Research clearly shows that without appropriate intervention or if only punishment is used, the fire misuse behaviors will very likely continue. Therefore, refer youth to Straight Talk since it is a proven-effective comprehensive intervention program.

Is Straight Talk a “Scared Straight” program?

- No. Scare tactics do not work: in fact, they can actually cause harm and have been proven to increase unwanted behaviors in youth. The Straight Talk program is based on currently known best practices in youth firesetting (YFS) intervention and prevention. It uses principles of cognitive behavior therapy and motivational interviewing as fundamental methods to promote behavior change. This supportive, non-punitive program focuses on building decision-making skills to positively redirect at-risk youth.

Who can refer youth to Straight Talk?

- Anyone can! We accept referrals to this free program from all sources. In fact, the program is widely utilized and endorsed by parents, schools, fire and police departments, juvenile courts, youth assistance, and other social service and community agencies.

Is there an age requirement?

- Please refer all children and teens who are suspected to be involved in (including those in a group watching the incident) misusing fire to this free program. While the group setting style of the class is typically most appropriate for children between the ages 8 – 17, our expert staff customize the education to each child's individual needs. This includes providing customized intervention for very young and special needs children. In short, make the referral to the program and don't ever hesitate to contact us to discuss potential options!

Should I refer a child if they were only an observer and didn't actually set the fire?

- Yes. Proactive education is beneficial to the child and family, as observing others misusing fire can negatively impact a child's behavior and future decision-making.

Our department already has a Youth Firesetting Program, so there isn't a need to refer to Straight Talk.

- We still encourage you to refer! Straight Talk augments and builds upon any education or intervention that you provide. It uses a multidisciplinary staff to provide a comprehensive curriculum not possible to do at a fire department YFS program. There is also great benefit to having children and their caregivers hear multiple professionals reiterate important safety information.

Who teaches the Straight Talk Program?

- A multidisciplinary approach is used to address the variety of factors that contribute to firesetting. Firefighters/Fire investigators, social workers, former youth firesetter, burn survivors, and medical personnel are utilized to discuss the social, legal, medical, future/career, and financial consequences in order to comprehensively address a youth's risky behaviors.

When should I refer? How do I refer?

- Make a referral as soon as you suspect a child is misusing or is at risk for misusing fire! The referral form is available online at: <http://traumaburn.org/prevention/straighttalk/index.shtml> Or feel free to call or email us. Our team is flexible to meet the unique considerations of each case.

Should I refer a child if they were not arrested, convicted, or otherwise proven guilty for firesetting or arson?

- Yes! Straight Talk is for all youth associated with fire misuse incidents, including those that observed and did not set the fire. As noted above, proactive education is beneficial to the child and family, as observing others misusing fire can negatively impact a child's behavior and future decision-making.

Who should come to the Straight Talk program?

- Youth who have misused fire (see the first FAQ), who are at risk for experimentation, and/or who have observed others misusing fire. It is mandatory for parent(s) or legal guardian to attend the entire program with youth. We encourage siblings 8 years and older and other adult caregivers to also come for education.

Does Straight Talk work?

- Straight Talk is proven as a highly effective program: A prospective study published in the *Journal of Trauma* demonstrated the recidivism rate for Straight Talk participants was 0.8% (less than 1 percent) versus 36% in the matched cohort group who did not attend the program.* Straight Talk was also highlighted by the United States Fire Administration as one of only eight exemplary prevention and intervention programs in the United States for the National Arson Awareness Week "Prevent Youth Firesetting" (page 6): www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/arson/aaw12_media_kit.pdf

[*Reference: Franklin GA, Pucci PS, Arbabi S, Brandt MM, Wahl WL, Taheri PA. Decreased juvenile arson and firesetting recidivism after implementation of a multidisciplinary prevention program. J Trauma. 2002 Aug;53(2):260-4; discussion 264-6. Available at: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12169931]

It was a minor incident, I talked with the child, and they seem like a good kid. Should I still refer?

- Yes. Without specialized intervention, youth are likely to continue misusing fire. Even small fire incidents that weren't done for malicious reasons have the potential for causing great harm. All fire misuse behaviors place children, siblings, family members, neighbors, firefighters, first responders, and other innocent bystanders at risk for injury and death. Each year youth-set fires cause hundreds of injuries, millions of dollars in damage, and are most likely to kill young children under the age of five.

I have a really unique situation involving a child and his family. I'm not sure where to turn for help.

- Please don't hesitate to contact us. We regularly provide free consultation on fire misuse incidents (both locally and nationally). We will help you come up with a supportive plan for the child and family.

I told the child's parents about Straight Talk and they say they don't want to come. Since I'm not going to prosecute the case, I can't make them. What do you recommend?

- Go ahead and send us the referral. Explain to the parents that Straight Talk is a supportive and non-punitive class. All families benefit from the safety education provided. You can suggest that they read testimonials from other parents (visit traumaburn.org/prevention/straighttalk/testimonies.shtml). Once you send us the referral, we will reach out and provide key information and safety tips to the caregivers.

How long is the program?

- Straight Talk is a 1-day class provided bimonthly for free in Ann Arbor.

Can I attend Straight Talk? Do you offer professional development training?

- Yes. Contact us to request being a professional observer. Our expert staff are also available to provide free educational sessions onsite at your agency on a variety of topics (e.g., youth firesetting, abuse/burns, Stop the Bleed training, etc.): traumaburn.org/who/team/staff/klas.shtml Contact us for more information.