

NoFIRES

Northwestern Juvenile Fire Intervention Response, Education and Safety Partnership

Office of Northwestern District Attorney, City of Northampton, City of Easthampton, Town of Greenfield, Department of Children and Families, Department of Mental Health, Town of Amherst, Town of Granby, Town of South Hadley, Town of Chesterfield, Town of Montague/Turners Falls, Town of Athol, Town of Ware, City of Springfield Fire Department, Clinical and Support Options, Inc., Massachusetts State Police, Town of Deerfield, Franklin/Hampshire Juvenile Probation Department, Franklin/Hampshire Juvenile Court Clinic, Massachusetts State Fire Marshall’s Office, Massachusetts Fire Academy, Franklin County Fire Chiefs Association, Hampshire County Fire Defense Association, National Fire Academy & Mass. Firesetters Academy/Michael McLeier, Northeast Center for Youth and Families

April 1, 2014



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INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Secretary Shor:

The purpose of our Community Innovation Challenge (CIC) grant was to establish and implement the NoFIRES Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program. Two years ago, the Office of Northwestern District Attorney and City of Northampton collaborated with numerous community partners to create the Northwestern Juvenile Fire Intervention Response Education and Safety (NoFIRES) Partnership. NoFIRES is a community response to youth-set fires. The CIC grant in 2012-2013 provided seed funding to launch a regional, multidisciplinary approach to reducing the incidents of juvenile firesetting while enhancing public safety. Our second CIC grant allowed us to continue to develop the curriculum for this important program, network with local agencies, expand our service area, and offer specialized trainings.

In April 2011, Northwestern District Attorney David E. Sullivan gathered community leaders in the fire service, school, social service, law enforcement, and mental health communities to discuss the lack of educational and clinical services for an estimated 60 to 75 youths who set fires each year in the Northwestern District. The NoFIRES program encompasses the 51 communities of Hampshire and Franklin counties, the town of Athol, and the City of Holyoke.

Juvenile firesetting is a serious public safety and community problem, with over 50% of firesetting incidents in the United States and the Northwestern District being set by juveniles. There were no formal fire safety education classes or clinical screenings being provided to youths in our district. We are pleased to report that the CIC Grant has been a catalyst for vibrant regional juvenile firesetter intervention program that has responded to 77 at-risk youth and families since the program started. Twenty-seven have successfully completed screenings and fire safety classes since May 1, 2013.

David E.. Sullivan
Northwestern District Attorney

Loren Davine
Executive Director/Program Manager
NoFIRES Partnership

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NoFIRES is a community response to youth-set fires. The 2012-2013 CIC grant provided seed funding to launch a regional, multidisciplinary approach to reducing the incidents of juvenile firesetting. The NoFIRES Partnership intervened with a total of 77 juvenile firesetters and their families since NoFIRES received the initial CIC grant in 2012. We were fortunate to receive a second CIC grant that began on May 1, 2014 and since then, twenty-seven (27) youths have been screened and successfully completed their fire education safety courses. Additionally, several of the clinical screenings resulted in referral to specialized counseling and treatment. Our NoFIRES Partnership developed a regional, multi-disciplinary program that provided effective intervention, education, and treatment referrals to youth and their families in our 51 communities.

In April 2011, a NoFIRES steering committee, consisting of fire and law enforcement professionals, mental health providers, and representatives from partnering agencies was formed. In early 2012, NoFIRES was incorporated as a non-profit organization, creating a Board of Directors and hiring an Executive Director/Program Manager. Specialized trainings for fire service intervention specialists and clinicians gave the program the necessary foundation to effectively screen and educate juvenile firesetters. Throughout this current grant cycle,

NoFIRES has continued to expand our service area, develop a standardized curriculum, provide additional trainings, and increase visibility of our program.

NoFIRES has established a model for a regional juvenile firesetter intervention program. It is continuing to build a solid foundation for long-term program and financial sustainability.

SECTION 1: GOALS

The NoFIRES core mission is to protect our youth, their families, and communities in which they live from dangerous and sometimes fatal firesetting behaviors. NoFIRES serves as a regional intervention and service model providing a comprehensive response system to juvenile firesetters from ages 5 to 17. Our service model includes guidelines for the clinical screening, education, and referral of juveniles and their families. In many cases, referrals and services are done in conjunction with a juvenile court or diversion action. Other times, a fire department, the Department of Children and Families, or a mental health provider makes a referral for services. The goal in the first year was to have 30 youths served through the program. This critical need, along with successful program development, resulted in 50 juvenile referrals. On May 1, 2013, NoFIRES expanded its service area to work with youth from the City of Holyoke and three additional North Quabbin communities. We also incorporated a Spanish bilingual education and screening component. The goal for NoFIRES was to serve 60 juveniles involved in youth-set fires. Unfortunately, we fell short of this goal due to a lack of participation from the City of Holyoke. We have been in contact with the City of Holyoke and the juvenile probation department for future referrals. However, we anticipated a higher number of fire education students by extending our service area to include Holyoke. We look forward to working with them in the future.

SECTION 2: PARTNER COMMUNITIES

The establishment of the NoFIRES community steering committee in 2011 encouraged open participation from any fire or police departments in 47 communities of the Northwestern District. Fire departments were approached by contacting individual Fire Chiefs, JFIS firefighters, and Franklin and Hampshire Fire Chief Associations. Also approached were key leaders in police departments, Department of Children and Families, social service agencies, mental health providers, and juvenile justice. All leaders were encouraged to join the steering committee based upon their expertise, knowledge of juvenile firesetting problem, commitment to youth, and ability to make appropriate referrals. The community steering committee continues to be an integral part of the NoFIRES Partnership.

Listed below are some of the NoFIRES lead partners, including the additional cities and towns added for the 2013-2014 CIC grant cycle. All cities and towns listed include their respective fire departments:

Office of Northwestern District Attorney
City of Northampton

City of Easthampton
City of Holyoke
Town of Greenfield
Department of Children and Families
Department of Mental Health
Town of Amherst
NoFIRES Board of Directors and Community Steering Committee
Town of Granby
Town of South Hadley
Town of Chesterfield
Town of Montague/Turners Falls
Town of Athol
Town of Ware
City of Springfield Fire Department- Holly Clement, JFIS
Clinical and Support Options, Inc.
Massachusetts State Police
Town of Deerfield
Franklin/Hampshire Juvenile Probation Department
Franklin/Hampshire Juvenile Court Clinic
Massachusetts State Fire Marshall's Office
Massachusetts Fire Academy
Franklin County Fire Chiefs Association
Hampshire County Fire Defense Association
Massachusetts Fire Academy and National Fire Academy/Michael McLeieer
Northeast Center for Youth and Families

NoFIRES Board of Directors and Community Steering Committee

NoFIRES Partnership, Inc. was established in 2012 as a non-profit organization under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Bylaws were adopted for effective management and sustainability. The Board of Directors consists of community members from the following areas: fire service, law enforcement, mental health, child welfare, accounting, and legal. An application was submitted to the IRS to gain 501(C) (3) tax-exempt status. Tax exempt status was granted after a very detailed and time consuming IRS application process.

SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The formation of a community steering committee was critical to defining the extent of youth-set fires in our community. This group of community stakeholders discussed the problem of juvenile firesetting and a regional plan for a solution. Research and data on youth-set fires from prior juvenile fire intervention programs was essential to establishing a baseline of critical need. The NoFIRES Steering Committee derived data and projected estimates from the City of Northampton Fire Department, Franklin/Hampshire Juvenile Court Clinic, National Fire Protection Association, David Wilcox, Ph.D., formerly of the Massachusetts Juvenile Firesetter Coalition, area firefighters, and fire chiefs.

The steering committee and the NoFIRES Board of Directors formed working subcommittees to develop best practices and implement the program. The six subcommittees include:

- Training and Education;
- Therapeutic and Mental Health;
- Communications and Community Outreach;
- Juvenile Justice;
- Firesetter Safety Education and Core Curriculum; and
- Development, Grants, and Finance.

NoFIRES developed training programs to create a specialized cadre of professionals who are knowledgeable and able to respond to juvenile firesetting incidents. Our specialized trainings included the following:

- National Fire Academy Juvenile Fire Intervention Specialist (JFIS) Training I & II;
- Juvenile Firesetting Collaborative Training for Public Safety, Mental Health Clinicians, School Counselors & Administrators;
- Juvenile Firesetting- A Massachusetts Overview for Social Services and Mental Health;
- Explosives, Recognition, and Safety Course;
- First Annual Arson Investigation and Prosecution Conference;
- Interviewing the Juvenile Firesetter training by Massachusetts State Police and Northwestern District Attorney's Juvenile Justice Unit; and
- Best practices for educating students with special needs

Firefighter Michael McLeier of the Merrimac Fire Department and Massachusetts Fire Academy and Lt. Paul Zipper of the Massachusetts State Police were instrumental in conducting the specialized JFIS trainings to our fire service and clinical professionals. NoFIRES has developed protocols for clinical screenings, fire safety and science education, and referrals to specialized counseling and treatment services.

The Community Innovation Challenge Grant helped to launch a program that has directly assisted 77 at-risk children of the Northwestern District. These intervention and educational services helped make a difference in the lives of these juveniles, their families, and community safety. The CIC funding has allowed our response to juvenile firesetters to go from no formal intervention to a coordinated multidisciplinary approach for juvenile firesetters. Some of the benchmarks for NoFIRES second year outcomes are as follows:

- Hiring of a new part-time NoFIRES executive director/program manager in May 2013 to oversee the implementation of the program throughout the Northwestern District;
- Developed a NoFIRES website and social media pages for outreach, education and as a portal for sharing resources with other juvenile firesetter intervention programs;
- Sponsored and organized the First Annual Arson Investigation and Prosecution Conference for 200 police and fire investigators from around The Commonwealth;
- Updated and expanded database to track referrals and outcomes;

- Developed a follow-up survey for program participants to track firesetting behavior after class participation and evaluate their experience with the program to allow for suggestions and improvements;
- Reviewed surveys completed by children and parents/guardians at the end of the education portion of the intervention and consider recommendations for improvement;
- Continued development of NoFIRES through the Board of Directors and Community Steering Committee;
- Continued development of an intervention and service model and guidelines for referral, intake, assessment, education and community resources for treatment of juveniles and their families;
- Effective delivery of services to 27 juveniles and their families including intakes, screenings, fire safety classes, interventions and referrals;
- Developed a modified curriculum of the Fire Safety Course for a child with special needs;
- Revised brochure, referral form, and contact information and distributed them to fire & police departments, schools districts, social service agencies, probation, and mental health professionals;
- Continued development of an effective community education and outreach strategy;
- Offered specialized trainings for clinicians, firefighters and law enforcement professionals about juvenile firesetters;
- Developed strategic plan for sustainable funding from private, municipal, state funding sources to cover future costs of the program;
- Offered awareness trainings for community stakeholders, including public safety, education, law enforcement, mental health, and social services providers;
- Obtained in-kind donation of conference space for annual Arson Investigation and Prosecution Conference, specialized trainings and meetings;
- Obtained in-kind donation of fire safety education spaces from local fire departments;
- Obtained monetary donation from Ron Meehan with the MA/SAFE program for the registration fees and meals for ADA's to represent each District from around the Commonwealth;
- Held meetings to reevaluate policies and procedures for screening committee of trained clinicians and fire safety professionals responsible for interviewing juvenile and family and determining referral needs;
- Developed a Fire Safety Science Education Curricula tailored to age specific juveniles;
- Updated guidelines for clinical referrals to counseling and/or treatment programs;
- Expanded record keeping system to track all cases referred to the program;
- Conducted additional outreach to schools, probation, public safety, law enforcement, mental health and social service providers;
- Developed a resource directory of partnering agencies names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, resources and services provided to program to enhance communication, collaboration, delivery of services and improve outcomes;

- Developed guidelines for intervention, education and referral for juveniles who repeat firesetting behavior;
- Reviewed and analyzed tracking data from the previous 12 month period;
- Established goals and objectives for the next 12 months;
- Developed a program budget for the upcoming year.

SECTION 4: BUDGET

Line 1 NoFIRES Project Manager \$28,000

Line 2 Fire Education classes and screenings \$5152

Line 3 Contractual clinician and fire service professional Services \$9,520

Line 4 Insurance \$1800

Line 5 Transportation \$2400

Line 6 Curriculum Materials \$2400

Line 7 Administrative Fee \$3180

Line 8 Accountant Services \$2000

Line 9 Training and Education \$1000

Line 10 Supplies and Operating Costs \$5218

Line 11 Website design \$1080

Line 12 Laptop and accessories \$2000

This budget builds on funds received in FY12 to continue to develop the program. We were able to use this grant to promote the NoFIRES program, network with referral sources, conduct presentations, offer trainings, and establish ourselves as a leader in the community for fire safety education.

The current grant budget was determined after closely reviewing the FY12 budget, expenditures, and program needs. We also looked closely at our goals and what we hoped to accomplish in our second year in operation. Although the requested funds were very close to our actual expenditures, we did request permission to modify the NoFIRES budget in January to support additional projects to further develop the program. Funds were shifted slightly to create additional line items for website design services and a laptop for the program. We did not initially budget for these expenses during the application process, however; it became very clear

that creating a NoFIRES website was one of the best ways for our referral sources and potential clients to gain information about our program. Our website also displays our program information as a model for other communities to replicate. The additional laptop makes the NoFIRES program mobile and enables our instructors to teach fire safety courses in any town.

5: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In our region, made up of small cities, suburbs, and rural communities, no one fire department or community has the capacity to sustain a juvenile firesetter intervention program. Through strong collaborations within our 51 communities, NoFIRES has developed the expertise to access and deliver fire safety education and clinical services required to effectively respond to juvenile firesetting. A coordinated regional approach has proven to be the most effective way to address this serious public safety and complex mental health problem.

Expanding and sustaining the NoFIRES program will, however, require access to funding resources beyond our CIC grant funding. Although many of the NoFIRES partners are contributing significant in-kind services and resources to ensure the success of the initiative, there are a number of costs inherent to the delivery of professional services to juveniles and families in the region. The CIC grant funded a part-time executive director/program manager, certified fire intervention specialists, clinical screenings and referrals by licensed clinical social workers (LICSW) and start-up expenses for quality teaching materials, equipment, and supplies. Without CIC Grant funds the NoFIRES program would not have been launched in the Northwestern District. An expansion CIC grant was awarded to increase services to juvenile firesetters and give an additional year to build a sustainable program.

Sustaining and expanding NoFIRES is a top priority. First and foremost, the strong partnerships that are already in place, as well as the collaboration of the NoFIRES Board of Directors and community steering committee, provide the nucleus of a sustainable program. Secondly, establishing NoFIRES, Inc. as a non-profit corporation with a tax-exempt 501(C)(3) designation enables NoFIRES to more readily access other grants and funding sources. Additionally, a sliding scale fee structure has been developed to generate funds to help cover the costs of LICSW screenings, fire safety education classes, and program management costs. Although we have instituted a program fee, it has been difficult to collect the funds from the families we work with. NoFIRES has applied to have its LICSW clinical screenings and assessments covered under applicable third-party health insurance coverage. However, it is unclear at this time if these services will be covered by insurance. The Arson Investigation and Prosecution Conference generated more than \$10,000 for the NoFIRES program. It was a huge success and we are already planning the second annual conference for October 2014. Sustainability is a main concern for our organization and we continue to discuss ways to generate funds to run this program.

Lastly, the program's continued outreach and training efforts will generate a solid number of court, fire service, and clinical referrals. The Department of Children & Families estimates that they will make at least 30 youth referrals each year from our region. Almost every DCF referral

will have his/her program fee waived so a challenge of NoFIRES will be to insure funding for these at-risk youth.

SECTION 6: OUTCOMES

In our final report, we have mentioned several positive outcomes that have come from the NoFIRES program services. In summary, the NoFIRES program delivers the critical intervention, education and clinical services to juvenile firesetters and their families. In less than one year, 27 at-risk youth and their families have been helped since May 2013. The regional aspect of the program, combined with high quality and free trainings for fires professionals and clinicians, significantly reduces juvenile firesetting in the region.

Reducing the incidents of juvenile firesetting increases overall public safety. The short and long-term reduction in burn injuries, loss of life, and property damage will be significant. Access to this type of a multi-disciplinary screening and intervention program expands the capacity of communities to respond to children and families in need in a timely and effective manner.

The collaboration of key community stakeholders and mental health professionals has led to successful outcomes. Incorporating a clinical screening part to our firesetter intervention program gives it the depth to address the complex mental health component that can be overlooked. A juvenile may now receive the necessary referrals for counseling or treatment.

PROJECT GOAL	MEASURE	CURRENT YEAR	PRIOR YEAR	TREND	TARGET	STATUS	CO
To sustain and expand a program to screen and identify high risk youth for fire setting behavior, including the development of preventative programs, through a	# of new communities participating in the program	51	N/A	N/A	51		We ge co se ne tha wi int

regional and multi-disciplinary approach	# of children and parents/guardians participating in intakes, screenings, fire safety classes, interventions and referrals	27	N/A	N/A	40		We we for acc inf an
	# of fire safety classes offered	5	N/A	N/A	5 traditional NoFIRES classes and 2 modified courses		We tra an tha acc ne
	% of survey respondents stating they are satisfied with the program	100%	N/A	N/A	100%		We rec ab als ad to aft
STATUS LEGEND	OFF TARGET:		CLOSE TO TARGET		ON TARGET:		NOT APPLICAB

Innovative Aspects of NoFIRES

The NoFIRES program came about as the result of a unique multi-disciplinary collaboration of community partners in the fire service, school, social service, law enforcement and mental health communities in the Northwestern District. It was created to respond to a regional need for early intervention, education and clinical services for juvenile firesetters and their families. Building an intervention and referral network like the one developed by the NoFIRES program would be

extremely difficult, costly and unsustainable for individual communities in the Northwestern District. A coordinated regional approach is required in order to deliver the type of fire education and therapeutic services needed to effectively respond to the complex problem of juvenile firesetting.

The NoFIRES program is innovative in its ability to not only provide fire safety education, but also to provide mental health screenings and referrals for counseling and treatment. Youth and families will receive specialized screenings by a licensed clinical social worker so appropriate social services can be provided to address the underlying causes of firesetting behavior.

Undoubtedly, identifying and addressing the root cause of juvenile firesetting will create permanent resolutions to firesetting behavior.

Potential Applicability to other Local or Regional Governments:

The NoFIRES program can be replicated at either the local or regional level throughout the state. The Massachusetts State Fire Marshall's Office has encouraged the development of this type of regional juvenile firesetter intervention collaboration. The NoFIRES Partnership would be available to assist communities with the establishment of similar programs. NoFIRES has created a [website](#) to assist with outreach, education, and as a resource portal for other juvenile firesetting intervention programs.

Due to financial pressures created by budget shortfalls, collaborations and sharing of resources and services are critical to ensuring that individual communities can meet their public safety obligations. No community is immune from the problem of juvenile firesetting. The NoFIRES regional intervention and service model allows a community to access effective education and therapeutic services for juvenile firesetters and their families, as well as specialized training programs for municipal personnel. These produce long term benefits for the community on many different levels. Collaboration, sharing of resources, and the development of best practices is at the heart of the NoFIRES program model and is a viable prototype for other communities to follow in order to create an effective juvenile firesetting intervention program.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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RESOURCES

[International Association of Firefighters](#)
[National Fire Academy](#)

Massachusetts Juvenile Firesetting Intervention
Merrimac Fire Department and Michael McLeieer
Holly Clements, Fire Stop Program of Springfield
Middlesex Partnerships for Youth, Inc.
MA SAFE Program, Ronald Meehan
The Northeast Youth Firesetting Conference
Ellen Brower Gately, MA, LMHC, Franklin County Juvenile Court Clinic