

## What to Look For: Signs A Child is Misusing Fire

A child or teenager may be misusing fire if you find:

- Lighters, matches, or fireworks in a child's room, pockets, or belongings
- Lighters, matches, aerosol sprays, fireworks, or flammable liquids (accelerants) in your home come up missing and/or are found in a different location than where an adult last left them
- Discarded lighters or matches in the garbage or yard
- Smell of smoke or something burning without a known source
- Unexplained burn/scorch marks or melted areas in carpeting, floors, toys, clothing, papers, furniture, waste baskets, closets, outdoor areas, grass, etc.
- Smell of gasoline, kerosene, alcohol-based gels, or other accelerants on a youth's clothing or in an area they have been playing
- Unusual items (or remains of unusual items) in the child's room or in other areas of your home or yard such as: toilet bowl cleaner, aluminum foil, plastic pop/soda bottles, candle/hobby/craft wicks, gunpowder, CO2 cartridges, etc.
- Videos or pictures of fire misuse on the youth's cell phone, computer, or online social media and video accounts

Even if a youth has not misused fire, they may be at a higher risk for future misuse if they:

- Show an extreme fascination or interest in fire
- Have observed others misusing fire (including adults)
- Frequently view online videos, blogs, or websites that have a focus on or display unsafe fire use
- Frequently play video games that involve fire balls, molotov cocktails, explosives, flame throwers, and other dangerous uses of fire

This information is part of the "Youth Firesetting Prevention and Intervention Tool Kit Sean's Story: My life torn apart by firesetting" [www.seans-story.org](http://www.seans-story.org)  
University of Michigan Trauma Burn Center