

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 (e.g., in the garbage, on the ground or yard, in hidden places, etc.)
- 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, mobile device, or related posts on their 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 a heightened interest in or extreme fascination with fire
- Have observed others misusing fire (including adults)
- Frequently view online videos, blogs, social media posts, 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