FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT YFIRES

1. Who is the YFIRES data system designed for?

YFIRES is designed to be as universal as possible. It could be used by fire departments, mental health programs, juvenile justice programs, non-profit based programs, and hopefully any other type of program configuration that may be operating. Because of this, it may not be a perfect fit for every situation. We hope we have built enough versatility into it that it can serve everyone well.

2. Is YFIRES a replacement for the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)?

No. NFIRS is a system for fire departments to report fire activity as part of their response to fires and other incidents within their communities. Youth firesetting behavior is not always reported to fire departments, therefore cannot be entered into the NFIRS system. Youth firesetting does not always qualify as a crime, so incidents may not be part of a local law enforcement data system. YFIRES is an attempt to capture information for kids that are involved in fire behavior regardless of the outcome or classification. An important question in YFIRES is "was the incident entered into NFIRS?" This intends to explore the relationship between youth fires that are entered into NFIRS and those that may be occurring un-tracked by that system. Since the national youth fire problem is measured by data from NFIRS, this may bring new insight into the scope of youth-set fires by looking at the problem from a different perspective.

3. Why is there a need to "Register?"

Registering for the YFIRES system allows us to build a network of participating programs. Through this effort, we can gather the information necessary to better illustrate the youth firesetting issue at a regional or national level. Registrants will be grouped by FEMA Regions, which allow for comparisons in different regions of the USA. The population base of the program service area is also part of the registration process. This allows programs to be compared with other programs of like size. Another element is the professional discipline which manages the program. There can be differences between those housed in a non-profit, for example, over those housed in a fire department. Registering also allows us to keep each program updated on new developments and program changes. None of the contact information provided will be used for anything outside of the administration of YFIRES. Your information will be as secure as the data entered into the system.

4. **How long does the registration process take?**

We hope to take no more than 48 hours to process and approve a registration. When a program submits their registration, a notification is sent to the YFIRES administrator. The administrator will then go into the system, review the application for completeness and to ensure it isn't a duplication (another person from the same program applying). When approved, another e-mail notification will arrive with instructions about how to finish the registration and begin use of the system. Because there is a human element in the process, it is subject to the YFIRES administrator's time availability. We appreciate your patience with this process.

5. **Are participants in YFIRES required to fill out all of the blanks in the database?**

No. The YFIRES data system does have 20 required data elements. The case cannot be submitted to YFIRES for inclusion in the national data set without all of these elements being complete. The remaining elements are what we have termed as "case management" data elements. They are to help you, the user, organize and store information on your case, completely paperless if you wish (other documents can be stored with the case including scanned images). YFIRES was designed to help understand the youth fire problem at a larger, national level while giving the user an effective case management tool to make program delivery easier and more efficient. It should be noted that YFIRES has been vetted by numerous programs to establish the list of data elements that have been included. These data elements were considered most useful for program operation.

6. **What qualifies a youth to be entered YFIRES?**

A youth must qualify first by their chronological age (independent of their developmental/functional age). This includes from birth to the last day of their 17th year. The data element for age begins at age 1 and goes through 17. A name does not have to be associated with a youth set fire. It is not uncommon for witnesses to see a youth set a fire but their name is not known to the witness and they are not apprehended. It is important to capture these cases and the details can be entered even without a name. It is suspected that the lack of inclusion of cases like this is responsible for the underreporting of youth firesetting nationally. A youth does not have to set a fire with destructive consequences to be entered into the system. Match/lighter misuse or other activity with fire constitutes a need for recording and/or intervention. A fire report, police report, or other government agency involvement is not necessary for a youth to be entered into the system. Many referrals come to programs through parents who are trying to be proactive about intervening in their child's firesetting behavior. Also, mental health practitioners may discover unreported firesetting behaviors in the course of other therapeutic work. YFIRES is designed for a wide array of practitioners and programs.

7. **Is YFIRES compatible with the interview/screening forms my program uses?**

YFIRES is sensitive to the fact that there are many different approaches to intervention. To this end, it does not favor any particular form or process. It allows the results of any form to be interpreted in the data elements. There is also generous opportunity for narratives to be added in text boxes where the information generated is not an exact fit for the program user. There is

a data element titled "Final Disposition of the Case." The choices in this data element are intended to interpret the results of all interview/screening tools into a response that can be compared to other programs. The choices are: • Comprehensive Fire Safety Education Only • Information Only - No Direct Contact • Referral to Intervention Services (other than Comprehensive Fire Safety Education) • Youth Not Seen By Program Comprehensive fire safety education is defined as specialized fire safety education by a person trained in understanding the specialized nature of youth misusing fire (as opposed to a generic fire station tour or talk with a fire service person not specifically focused no youth firesetting education). Information only, with no direct contact would be defined as having minor discussions with the family/child over the phone or other communication system but not having a face to face meeting with the child/family. Referral to Intervention Services would be defined as any related services other than comprehensive fire safety education (indicating the factors behind the firesetting behavior are more than a lack of knowledge). And if a youth is not seen by the program, that can be noted.

8. **How were the data elements in YFIRES selected?**

The selection of the data elements within YFIRES was an exhaustive process of working with various stakeholders (see "Contributing Partners"). It began by examining the data elements in the databases of programs that were actively using data systems to gather information about youth firesetting behaviors. From there, the elements were pared down to the most minimal number possible. Since this data system needs to work all sizes of programs (statewide effort to small town), boiling the system down to its simplest form was very important. The effort settled on 20 key data elements that would not intrude on the confidentiality of the youth referred to a program, yet share important insight into the type of youth and behavior characteristics common to all programs. It should be noted that within the data system, some of these data elements will have more than one bit of information collected in a single function. For example, the calendar choice for one data element actually provides three pieces of information. The entire database consists of over 150 data elements. This is somewhat misleading in that the balance beyond the 20 required data elements are optional. They are not necessary for participation. These same elements are also expandable. Information on siblings, associates in fire activity, etc. can be added as needed, allowing great flexibility with this system. Most of YFIRES uses drop down menus to make data entry choices consistent. These menus were also scrutinized by the YFIRES team to ensure they covered the greatest number of possibilities while keeping choices concise enough to remain useful for data evaluation. The system offers generous opportunities to utilize text boxes to gather information that does not fit the menus offered.

9. **Is YFIRES compatible with other data systems that are on the market?**

Not directly. YFIRES will have the capability of uploading data from other systems or downloading data into other systems, but only with a little work on your part (or the vendor you currently use). If you are currently using a database and want to upload that information into YFIRES, you would have to first get it into a CSV file format. It would have to be set up to utilize the same data elements and same menu choices as YFIRES. This is likely an impossible task in most cases. Based on the research done prior to the development of YFIRES, every data element in YFIRES is used by other databases, but none of them used all of them, nor do they

utilize the same menu choices. This does not make other systems any more or less correct than YFIRES, it simply means the YFIRES team approached it with a slightly different eye. If you are happy with your current system, you could still utilize YFIRES and only enter the required 20 data elements that contribute to the national data set. It is estimated that input of this nature might only take one or two minutes. This will allow your program to be part of the larger picture of data on youth firesetting behaviors.

10. Is there a national standard for data collection on youth firesetting?

Not at this time. However, YFIRES has included members of the National Fire Academy training courses on youth firesetting and members of the NFPA Standard 1035 Committee to help demonstrate the need for a national standard on data collection for youth firesetting. They have yet to take action but the issue seems to be well received.

11. Can documents, such as incident reports or confidentiality waivers, be attached to a case file in YFIRES?

Yes. At the bottom of each tab in the system there is a button called "Store Case Documents" that will allow the Program User or Administrator to attach documents relevant to that case. This function can effectively allow a program to be completely paperless and electronically secure.

12. What is a Program Administrator, Program User, and Data Retriever, the three categories available for registration?

The Program Administrator is the person who oversees a youth firesetting program's data entry into the YFIRES Data System. He/She will have administrative rights to all aspects of the program overseen. Each program can have only one Program Administrator. Program Administrators can also assign Program Users and/or Data Retrievers. The only way for a person to become a Program User or Data Retriever is by first being entered into the system by the Program Administrator. The Program User is a person who can enter and update a youth firesetting program's data. If multiple Program Users work under a Program Administrator (e.g. if several fire agencies are enrolled as Program Users under a regional program run by one Program Administrator), the different Program Users CAN view the case information of other Program Users. This is an important consideration since it could impact confidentiality issues between agencies. The Program Administrator has rights to be able to complete a Program User's entries, or finalize them for submission to the national data set. A Data Retriever is a person assigned by the Program Administrator. He/She can generate/download reports associated with their assigned program (national data and case management data). He/She has no capability to enter or modify cases. This person might be the data analyst or public spokesperson for an agency or organization. It should be noted that the Program Administrator has the capability to draw program data as well. All programs, Program Users, and Data Retrievers operating under a single Program Administrator should understand the necessity for a cooperative working relationship since confidential information may be seen by all user levels.