

FIRE SAFETY & PREVENTION

A Resource Guide for Child
Welfare Professionals



Education Services
Transforming Knowledge into Skills



**Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies**
The voice of child welfare in Ontario

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fire Safety and Prevention: A Resource Guide for Child Welfare Professionals was a collaborative effort by a number of service providers in Ontario, who all share the common goal of keeping our children safe.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) would like to thank the following people and agencies for their contribution to this resource guide:

Karen Bridgman-Acker, Office of the Chief Coroner

Larry Cocco, Office of the Fire Marshal - Ontario

Bev Gilbert, Office of the Fire Marshal - Ontario

Peter Kiatipis, MCYS

Gabe Minor, MCYS

Anna Selchen, MCYS

Carolyn Ussher, Toronto CAS

Denise Wallace, Office of the Fire Marshal - Ontario

Special thanks to the Office of the Fire Marshal especially Larry Cocco, Fire Investigations Coordinator and Denise Wallace, Fire & Life Safety Education Officer who offered their expertise in the area of fire safety and provided valuable input and feedback.

Lorraine McNamara, B.A., M.S.W.,

Principal Writer

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Introduction

LANDLORD FINED \$13,000 FOR FAULTY SMOKE DETECTORS

Canada.com – April 2, 2007

Makayla Brideau, 4, died May 10, 2006, when fire raced through her two-storey home trapping her inside. Fire investigators determined the blaze started as a result of careless smoking. The owner of the Ottawa duplex that caught fire, killing a young girl, has been fined \$13,000 for failing to have working smoke alarms. The girl's mother was badly burned in the fire. At the time of the blaze, she pounded on her neighbours' door, screaming for help and was frantic about her four-year-old daughter, who was still trapped inside their burning home. But there was little anyone could do to help the mother, who was burned from the waist down trying to save her daughter from the heavy smoke and flames that would consume their home just after 1:20 a.m.

Fire safety and prevention is an important issue and a shared responsibility of all community members, including provincial and municipal government agencies, to keep families safe. Fire safety and prevention efforts require community collaboration and partnership, effective public awareness and educational programs to adequately protect families.

Despite the fact that the majority of home fires are preventable, there were an average of 1,297 home fires per year between 2004 and 2008 in Ontario (Office of the Fire Marshal, 2011). Tragically, "preventable" home fires are the cause of most children's fire related injuries and death.

This resource guide has been developed in collaboration with other service providers, for the purposes of:

1. Educating and enhancing child welfare professionals' awareness about the risk factors associated with home fires
2. Identifying safety and prevention strategies that can be used by families
3. Providing a list of resources that are available to the child welfare professionals and to the families and children they work with





DID YOU KNOW?

- Home fires are the leading cause of unintentional death for young children (Chen, Bridgman-Acker, Edwards & Lauwers, 2009)
- Most home fires occur at night while people are asleep (Office of the Chief Coroner, 2009)
- Every year in Canada, approximately 1,300 fires are started by children playing with lighters and matches (OFM, n.d.)
- Most children who died in fires were in homes without smoke alarms or working smoke alarms (Groff, 2010)

Given that residential fire is the leading cause of unintentional death for young children in the home, fire safety and prevention is a concern for professionals whose mandate is to keep children safe. With the assistance of local fire services, local children's aid societies and other community agencies, families can learn how to reduce the risk of experiencing a home fire and how to safely escape if one occurs.

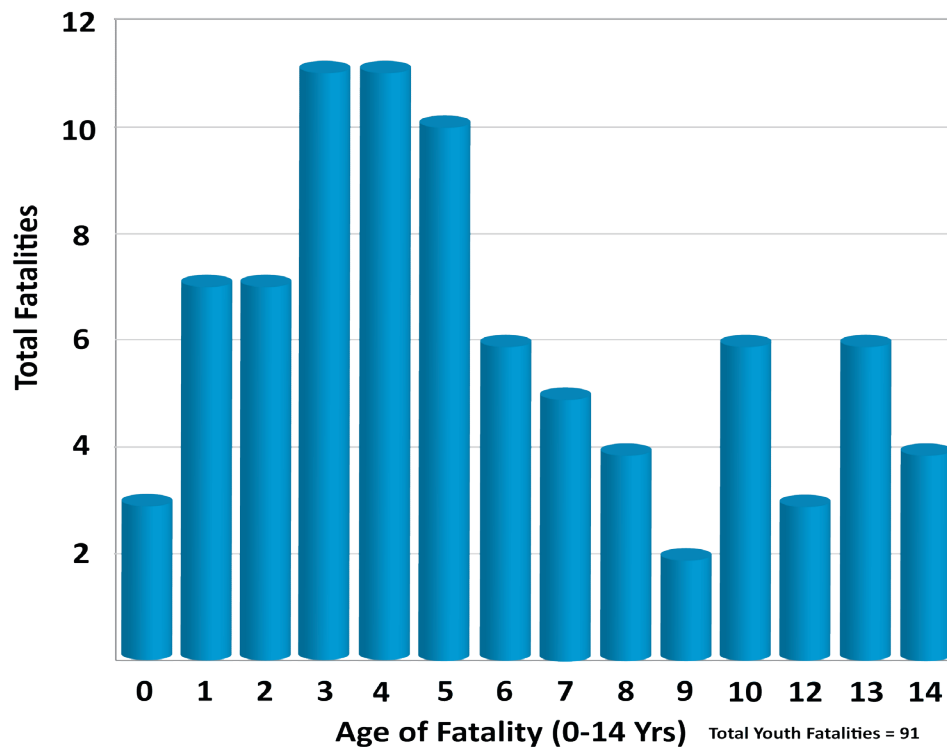
Research in the area of fire safety and prevention has identified risk factors associated with the population group at greatest risk, the causes of home fires, and the most effective safety measures which reduce the occurrence of fires and the risk of injury and/or death.

Studies have identified a number of demographic, socioeconomic and behavioural factors that place some populations at greater risk for home fires (Chen et al., 2009).

The highest risk group for fire related injuries and death is children under the age of five, primarily due to their inability to escape from the home independently (Chen et al., 2009, p.42). Statistics from the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) Ontario show that between 2000 and 2009, 91 children died in fires, and the highest number of child deaths occurred in the 3 to 5 years age group (see Graph 1) (OFM, 2011, p.3). Young children are also more susceptible to severe burns from flames and toxicity from smoke (Safe Kids Canada, n.d.). Boys, at any age, are at greater risk than girls, and boys are nearly twice as likely to have played with fire than girls (U.S. Fire Administration, 2004).

Graph 1
2000-2009: Youth Fire Fatalities by Age

Ontario Residential
 Fatal Fires



Adapted from: Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM), (2011). 2000-2009: Youth fire fatalities by age. In Ontario residential fatal fires : Children (age 0 to 14). Unpublished report.

A number of factors contribute to the danger of death or injury, including families who live in substandard housing and in more crowded conditions (Australasian Fire Authorities Council, 2005). As well, families with limited financial resources may be less able to respond to fire safety initiatives; for example, unable to afford to buy the required number of smoke alarms needed in their homes, as outlined by fire regulations.

Other factors include situations where children are inadequately supervised, homes where adults smoke, and increased access and availability of fire starting materials, such as lighters and matches.

There is a risk of children setting fires due to children's curiosity and the unsafe storage of lighters and matches. The Office of the Fire Marshal reports that 21 percent of all fires involving child deaths between the years 2000 and 2009 were caused by children playing with fire starting materials (OFM, 2011, p.6). Since younger children are often curious and also, may not recognize the danger of playing with matches and lighters, the risk of fires unintentionally set by children is a major risk factor for fire related injuries and deaths of children and other family members (Groff, 2010; Chen et al., 2009; U.S. Fire Administration, 2004).

Studies also show that increased risk of fire, fire related injuries and death is associated with excessive adult alcohol use (Australasian Fire Authorities Council, 2005). Further, excessive alcohol use by adults is more prevalent among those adults who smoke (Australasian Fire Authorities Council, 2005). This combination of risk factors, along with young children in the home, creates an environment that is high risk for home fires and potentially dangerous for children and other family members.

While reviewing fire investigations home fires during the past few years, the OFM observed that six out of 31 fatal fire events involved children who had received services from a children's aid society (CAS). Ten out of the 42 youth deaths that occurred during the study period were children involved with a child welfare agency (OFM, 2010b).

In response to this observation, the Ontario Coroner's office conducted a study, entitled *Paediatric Accidental Residential Fire Deaths in Ontario* (Chen et al., 2009) which retrospectively reviewed all residential fire deaths involving children that occurred in Ontario between January 1st, 2001 and December 31st, 2006. The findings were as follows:

Section adapted from Chen et al. (2009), pp. 38-41

- 60 child deaths occurred in 39 fire events.
- Fire-playing and electrical failures were the top two causes of fire.
- Fire-playing led to 10 fires and 12 child deaths.
- Fire events caused by fire-playing children were frequently associated with children's aid involvement; of the 12 deaths caused by fire playing, 7 (58 percent) were involved with a children's aid society.
- More fires occurred during the night (12am to 9am) than in the daytime.
- Night time fires were exclusively caused by electrical failure and unattended candles, whereas daytime fires (from 12pm to 6pm) were all caused by fire-playing and stove fires.
- The majority of children (59 percent) were awake at the time of the fire or were awakened by the presence of smoke, a smoke alarm or a family member calling.
- Children were not able to escape as a result of their inability to respond appropriately (e.g. hiding in a bedroom, being afraid to jump from a window)
- Smoke alarms were found at the scene of 32 out of 39 (82 percent) fire events; only 46 percent of smoke alarms found actually functioned, however.
- Although most fires started in the living room, most children died in a bedroom. One explanation for this is by the time the smoke reached the bedroom, the house was 'smoked filled' making the route of escape inaccessible. A second explanation is that children, who are afraid when they discover fire, will retreat to their bedrooms for safety.



A consistent contributor to children's fire related deaths and injuries is the lack of working smoke alarms in homes and/or missing smoke alarms. Statistics from the Office of the Fire Marshal support this finding in that 46 percent of all home fires where children died did not have smoke alarms or were present, and not working (OFM, 2011, p.8).



The absence of smoke alarms can increase the possibility of a fatality in a fire by 60 percent (Australasian Fire Authorities Council, 2005, p.6). Studies show that homes most at risk from fire (low income households) are also the least likely to have smoke alarms installed (Australasian Fire Authorities Council, 2005).

There is some research on fire prevention and safety showing that the overall rate of injuries and death has decreased due to increased compliance with fire regulations requiring the installation of smoke alarms (Noordam & Garis, 2006). In the United States, Oklahoma City reported a 74 percent reduction in injuries from residential fires following a highly targeted campaign involving a smoke alarm giveaway programme (Noordam & Garis, 2006). Critics argue that this reduction may not be solely due to the giveaway of smoke alarms as the area experienced a lower number of fires and there was an increase in public fire education as a result of the program. Homes without alarms, usually associated with lower socioeconomic status, are at a higher risk of fire and fire deaths; merely giving free smoke alarms may be futile without increasing the level of fire safety consciousness (Noordam & Garis, 2006).

Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, (FPPA) administered by the Office of the Fire Marshal, requires municipalities in Ontario to establish public education and fire prevention programs within their communities (Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997). The programs enable fire services to educate the residents of Ontario about fire prevention, detection and escape. The FPPA supports the provision of the best possible level of protection from fire to all residents by each municipality and county.

Ontario Fire Code

The Ontario Fire Code (Fire Code) is a regulation made under the FPPA that contains comprehensive fire safety requirements applicable to all buildings and premises in the province. The Fire Code requires that smoke alarms be installed on every storey of a dwelling and outside all sleeping areas (Ontario Fire Code Regulation, 2007). The Office of the Fire Marshal's office recommends that smoke alarms be installed in all bedrooms for additional safety.

DID YOU KNOW?

Homeowners

It is the responsibility of homeowners to install and maintain smoke alarms on every storey of their home and outside sleeping areas.

Landlords

It is the responsibility of landlords to ensure their rental properties comply with the law.

Tenants

If a tenant of a rental property does not have the required number of smoke alarms, s/he should contact his/her landlord and/or housing authorities immediately. It is against the law for tenants to remove batteries or tamper with smoke alarms in any way.



Ontario Fire Services

The Office of the Fire Marshal - Ontario is a provincial office whose duties include investigating the cause, origin and circumstances of any fire, any explosion or condition that in the opinion of the Fire Marshal might have caused a fire, explosion, loss of life or damage to property (OFM, n.d.).

The Office of the Fire Marshal provides public education to enhance awareness about fire prevention and safety measures. It supports and assists municipalities, territories without municipal organization, and First Nations communities to enhance the effectiveness of fire protection services based on local needs and circumstances. A critical aspect of this support is the identification of risk factors for fire deaths in children.

Municipal Fire Departments have the direct responsibility for firefighting, implementing local public fire safety and prevention programs and conducting inspections to enforce the Fire Code. Municipal fire departments are required, under the FPPA, to conduct inspections upon request or if they receive a complaint.

In Ontario, there are many areas where fire services are provided by volunteers; volunteer fire departments account for more than 50 percent of all fire departments in the province (OFM, 2011). In these locations, fire chiefs and volunteers provide fire services including public education and fire inspections.

The level of fire services provided by municipal fire services are based on the needs and circumstances within the community. The fire protection services may be significantly different in a small rural area as opposed to the larger urban centres.

Fire Services for First Nations Communities/Aboriginal Reserves are managed by First Nations. They are supported through funding by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The Office of the Fire Marshal does not have any investigative authority on First Nations communities or on reserves but may attend and assist when requested to do so. The actual level of fire services varies across the different communities and locations.

Ontario Child Welfare Services

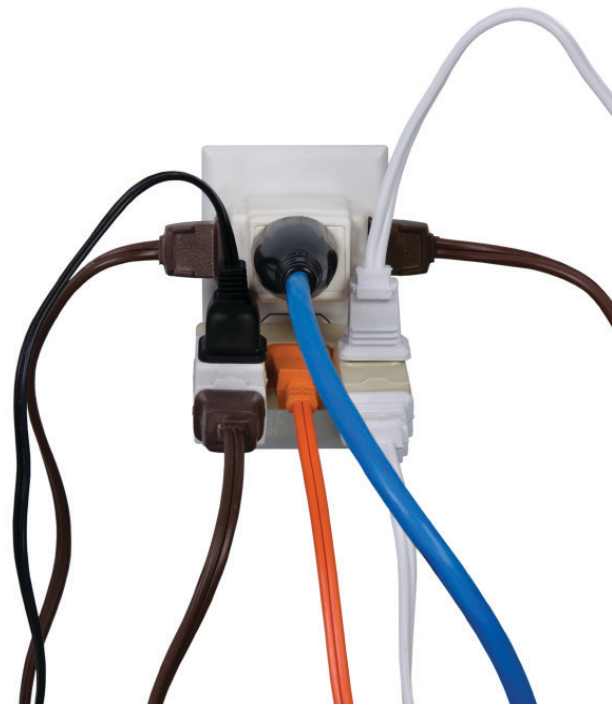
The primary purpose of children's aid societies in Ontario is to promote the best interests, protection, and well-being of children as mandated by the *Child and Family Services Act, R.S.O. 1990*. Child welfare professionals investigate reports of abuse and neglect involving children under the age of 16.

Reports of neglect may involve situations where the "child's living conditions are hazardous and/or that [it] is suggestive of neglect" (Ontario Child Protection Standards, 2007, p.33). *The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect* (CIS) (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010), found that the incidence of "other home injury hazards, defined as the quality of household maintenance where a child might have access to things such as poisons, fire implements orelectrical hazards" make up about four percent of all substantiated child maltreatment reports . The CIS does not break down the incidence of substantiated reports involving hazards related only to the risk of fire and thus, we do not know what percentage of substantiated protection concerns are related exclusively to fire hazards (p.63).

It is rare for child welfare agencies to receive referrals solely related to fire hazards in residences, such as no working smoke alarms or children setting fires. The child welfare professional is often in a position, however, to observe whether or not the risk factors for home fires are present, either during their first home visit or on subsequent home visits.

If a report to CAS involves a report that the child's living conditions are hazardous, the child welfare professional will observe the entire home in order to assess the child's immediate safety.

Services and education to families involving fire safety and prevention by child welfare professionals differ across the province. Some children's aid societies have written procedures describing what the child welfare professional can do when there are no working smoke alarms and/or missing smoke alarms. There are a number of agencies, who work in collaboration with other emergency services, to supply free smoke alarms to families who do not have them.



What We Know:

RISK FACTORS FOR HOME FIRES IN ONTARIO

Ongoing research into the etiology of home fires has identified a number of risk factors that are associated with a higher rate of incidence and fire related injuries and death.

Many of these factors, such as lower socioeconomic levels, substandard housing, overcrowded conditions, children under the age of five, alcohol and drug abuse and lack of supervision, are similar to the characteristics of the families involved with child welfare.

The Office of the Fire Marshal (2011) indicates three primary risk factors that are associated with fire related injuries and death of children:

1. Lack of working smoke alarms and/or missing smoke alarms
2. Accessibility and availability of fire starting materials (matches and cigarette lighters)
3. Lack of a home fire escape plan



RISK FACTORS FOR HOME FIRES IN FIRST NATIONS/ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The social conditions of Canada's Aboriginal people vary greatly according to government jurisdiction, geographical location, income level and cultural factors. Aboriginal families living in First Nations/Aboriginal communities are at a greater risk of fires, fire related injuries and death, often because of the lack of resources and substandard housing conditions. In some homes there is no running water or electricity which increases the risk of fire from candles, lanterns, wood stoves and fuel-burning portable space heaters (Assembly of First Nations, 2006). Overcrowding may be a concern as it is common for extended family members to live together. Additional concerns in Aboriginal communities include careless smoking, cooking fires and alcohol use.

DID YOU KNOW?

Almost one third (31 percent) of all fire deaths in the Aboriginal population are in children between the ages of 1 and 14, compared to an average of 16 percent in the total Canadian population (Assembly of First Nations, 2006, p.10)

The capacity for communities to respond to fire can be severely limited, or non-existent. Firefighting equipment is often inadequate and there is less access to fire prevention education (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010). Research indicates that nearly seven out of every 10 homes that had fires in First Nations communities did not have smoke alarms installed (Assembly of First Nations, 2006, p.10). Families may state that the reason there are no smoke alarms is because they become “nuisance alarms” as they are triggered by the smoke from a wood stove. According to the OFM, smoke alarms can still be installed by putting them in bedrooms (or rooms other than where the woodstove is located) and by installing them on a wall away from the wood burning appliance. It is also possible to use a photoelectric type of smoke alarm as these are less susceptible to nuisance alarms caused by smouldering fires.

DID YOU KNOW?

Smoke alarms are essential to provide early detection and warning of fire. They sound an alarm and can provide the occupants with the precious seconds they need to get out safely. Smoke alarms are essential to survival.

Home Fire Safety

According to the Office of the Fire Marshal:

Most fatal fires occur at night when everyone is asleep. In many cases the occupants were never alerted to the fire because there were no smoke alarms or the smoke alarms were inoperative. Many occupants in these homes just never wake up or when they are finally aware of the fire, there is no time to escape. Working smoke alarms can give you and your family early warning of fire and enough time to get out safely. Smoke alarms can truly provide a sound you can live with.

(OFM, 2010a)

Child welfare professionals routinely discuss the health risks of smoking in the home with families who have young children and parents are encouraged to smoke outside. Apart from exposure to second hand smoke, other risks are associated with adults smoking, including easier access by

children to smoking materials, such as matches and lighters. While in the home, child welfare professionals can observe whether matches and lighters (including those used for lighting barbecues) are stored out of the reach of children, in a locked cabinet or kept with the adult smoker. If the case history of the family indicates a previous incident(s) of children playing with fire materials, the child welfare professional should consider this as an additional risk factor and assess accordingly.



DID YOU KNOW?

During home visits, child welfare professionals can check to see if the home has working smoke alarms on every storey and outside all sleeping areas.

- Are the smoke alarms working?
- Have they been tested recently?
- Are all of the exits in the home clear and not cluttered?
- Are matches and lighters out of sight and out of reach of children?

Research shows that most home fires start during the night, when occupants are asleep (OFM, 2011; Office of the Chief Coroner, 2009). While the sound of a smoke alarm will alert occupants to the presence of smoke, it is critical that a family develop a home escape plan. The black, thick smoke makes it impossible to see and there is no time for indecision as the home can be engulfed in flames within minutes. This is especially important for children who may be afraid when awakened suddenly by a smoke alarm.

CLEARLY KNOWING WHAT TO DO AND WHERE TO GO CAN SAVE PRECIOUS TIME.

In addition to the three primary risk factors of no working smoke alarms, accessibility to fire starting materials and the lack of a home fire escape plan, the Office of the Fire Marshal (2008) has identified a number of other risks, some of which may be observed during home visits by child welfare professionals:

- The presence of candles within reach of children and/or unattended lit candles
- Blocked exits due to extreme clutter and/or hoarding
- Overloaded electrical circuits; widespread use of extension cords
- Space heaters used unsafely; not kept a safe distance away from items that can burn

What can families do to make their homes safer?

THREE PRIMARY SAFETY MEASURES

1. Working Smoke Alarms

Families can ensure that there are working smoke alarms installed on every storey of the home and outside all sleeping areas. For extra protection, working smoke alarms should be installed in all bedrooms, especially if a child has shown curiosity about fire and/or has been observed playing with fire starting materials.

In some cases, families will remove batteries from smoke alarms because they accidentally go off due to cooking, smoking and/or steam from showers. Remedies for these nuisance alarms include moving the smoke alarm to another location or having a smoke alarm that has a hush feature. For more information, visit the OFM website listed in the resources section of this guide.

Smoke alarms should be tested monthly and the batteries replaced annually or whenever the low battery warning goes off.

When child welfare professionals observe that there are no working smoke alarms in a home, there are a number of activities they can do to assist the family in keeping their children safe.

CHILD WELFARE ACTIVITIES WHEN THERE ARE NO WORKING SMOKE ALARMS:

- Provide information to the family about the laws requiring working smoke alarms; the responsibilities of homeowners, landlords, tenants and housing authorities.
- Offer to advocate on the family's behalf with fire departments, landlords and/or housing authorities to have smoke alarms installed according to the Fire Code.
- Consider obtaining funds so the family can purchase the required number of smoke alarms (specifically, those approved by Underwriters Laboratories of Canada which comes with detailed manufacturer's instructions about installation and maintenance).
- Contact your local fire department and ask them to install a smoke alarm in order to make the home safer.
- Consult with your supervisor about how your agency can provide the family with a smoke alarm immediately.

2. Safe Storage of Fire Starting Materials

Families can ensure that fire starting materials are kept away from children, out of sight and out of reach in a locked cabinet. Adults who smoke should carry only one lighter or pack of matches with them.

Parents can talk to their children about never touching matches or lighters and to tell an adult immediately if they find them.

Families can ensure that young children are adequately supervised, especially in households where adults smoke and there may be easier access and availability to smoking materials.

If parents observe that their child is inappropriately interested in fire (e.g. s/he has matches or lighters in his/her pockets or hidden in his/her room, there is evidence of fire play, s/he always wants to light candles or light the parent's cigarettes), parents need to speak with the child about the dangers of playing with fire and fire safety measures. Parents should contact the local fire department and indicate that their child has a history of fire setting or is interested in fire play.

When child welfare professionals observe unsafe storage of fire starting materials in a home, there are a number of activities they can do to assist the family in keeping their children safe. Child welfare professionals can

encourage families to take a critical look at their homes to determine whether they can make some improvements to ensure the safety of the home and its occupants. For a fire safety tip sheet, see *Appendix A*, or visit www.oacas.org to download one.



CHILD WELFARE ACTIVITIES WHEN THERE IS EVIDENCE OF UNSAFE STORAGE OF FIRE STARTING MATERIALS:

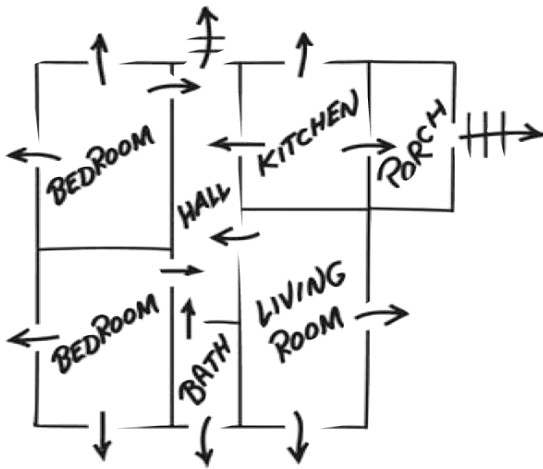
- Provide information and education to the family about the risks associated with children having easy access to fire starting material, especially lighters and matches.
- Speak to families about how they can educate their children about the dangers of playing with lighters, matches and lit candles; ask them to make sure their children are clear about what to do if they find these items.
- If there is evidence of fire play, speak to families about safety precautions they need to take and offer to talk to the child about this behaviour and the risks associated with it.
- If there is a history of fire setting incidents by the child, speak to the parents about what help is available. See "Help for child fire setters" in the resources section for more information.
- Contact your local fire department and ask for assistance to make the home fire safe.

3. Home Fire Escape Plans

Families can develop home fire escape plans with their children. The plan should include:

- Making sure everyone knows two ways out of each room, if possible
- Determining who is responsible for helping young children escape
- Making sure everyone knows what the designated meeting place is outside the home
- Teaching children to call the fire department once they are outside the home – from a neighbour's home or using a cell phone – never from inside the home
- Teaching children to never re-enter a home that is on fire or where there is smoke
- Making sure all exits in the home are clear and easily accessible
- Speaking to the children about what they should do when they hear a smoke alarm ringing, smell smoke, or see flames
- Practicing the home fire escape plan so children will know clearly what to do

Child welfare professionals can encourage families to develop fire escape plans. This is particularly important for families with younger, more vulnerable children and when there are a number of risk factors associated with the occurrence of home fires and fire related injuries and deaths. For a sample home fire escape plan, see *Appendix B*, or go to www.oacas.org to download one.



CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS CAN ASSIST FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOME ESCAPE PLANS BY:

- Providing information and education about the importance of having a home fire escape plan
- Providing resources outlining what a home fire escape plan should include (see *Appendix A: Fire Safety Tip Sheet* and *Appendix B: sample Home Fire Escape Plan* included in this guide)
- Contacting your local fire department and asking for assistance to make the home fire safe

CHILD AND YOUTH WORKERS WHO PROVIDE SERVICES TO CROWN WARDS LIVING INDEPENDENTLY, MAY HAVE CONCERNS THAT SOME OF THESE YOUTHS' RESIDENCES ARE UNSAFE. THE FIRE SAFETY MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE SECTION "WHAT CAN FAMILIES DO TO MAKE THEIR HOMES SAFER" MAY ASSIST ALL YOUTH IN HAVING SAFER RESIDENCES.

Collaboration and Partnership

The enhancement of fire safety and prevention measures is made possible when there is a concerted effort and commitment made by community services to work in partnership in order to achieve the common goals of reducing risks to children from preventable home fires. Working in partnership with schools, local and provincial fire services, government agencies, emergency services, children's mental health resources and child welfare agencies means sharing information, expertise, and resources.

A number of children's aid societies and other agencies have developed programs and initiatives in collaboration with local fire services.



Existing initiatives on which other agencies can build include:

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF THE COUNTY OF LANARK AND THE TOWN OF SMITHS FALLS (LANARK CAS) AND FIRE CHIEFS OF LANARK COUNTY

The child welfare professionals in this agency found that there were many missing smoke alarms or non-functioning smoke alarms in the homes they visited. In June 2009, the Lanark CAS partnered with the Lanark County Fire Services and developed a program whereby fire services donate smoke alarms and batteries to the Lanark CAS for workers to give to the families that need them. Training by the fire services was provided to child welfare professionals. The Lanark CAS may also refer families to the local fire services for additional assistance if necessary. The fire department conducts a follow-up visit in order to ensure that the smoke alarms are properly installed and working.

HAMILTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

In 2008, Emergency Services in the City of Hamilton collaborated with the Hamilton CAS to develop refrigerator magnets containing important fire safety information. These magnets are given to families by child welfare professionals.

Alarmed and Ready is a program developed by Hamilton Emergency Services that supplies free smoke alarms to families that require them and are unable to purchase them.

KAWARTHA-HALIBURTON CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY AND LOCAL FIRE SERVICES

In response to a fire tragedy in the community, Kawartha-Haliburton CAS provided a one-day training session for staff and foster parents in November 2009. This collaborative training effort included the KHCAS, local fire services, the Office of the Fire Marshal and the Office of the Chief Coroner.

KINGSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

After noticing that there were a high number of incidents of students involved in fire play and fire setting, the Kingston Public School Board collaborated with Kingston Fire and Rescue to provide a one day training seminar entitled *The Arson Prevention Program* (November 2009).

TORONTO COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION AND TORONTO FIRE SERVICES

Toronto Community Housing Corporation and Toronto Fire Services collaborated to install electric stoves that contain a Safe-T-element in housing units. The Safe-T-element prevents stovetop cooking fires by controlling the high end temperature of the burners.

WHAT CAN CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES DO TO PROMOTE COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS?

- Meet with your local fire departments to discuss a partnership in the provision of services to families involved with child welfare agencies who may need education, increased awareness of fire safety measures, smoke alarms and fire inspections.
- Provide educational materials, from local fire departments and/or the Office of the Fire Marshal, to child welfare professionals so they can assist families to keep children safe from fire.
- Collaborate with local fire services and/or the Office of the Fire Marshal to organize educational opportunities for child welfare professionals. Cross-training experiences are an important component of collaboration and partnership.
- Offer to provide educational programs to local fire services about the duty to report child welfare concerns.
- Consider participating in multi-disciplinary initiatives and conferences with local fire services, housing authorities, schools, and public health to enhance public education and awareness of fire safety measures.



Resources

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES AND CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Contact your local fire departments for assistance in the education of families, requests for fire inspections, non-compliance with fire regulations, the provision of free smoke alarms (in some municipalities). Further, most local fire departments will have a variety of educational material that can be downloaded.

NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION (NFPA)

This website provides a smoke alarm installation guide and an information sheet with safety tips for smoke alarms, all downloadable for free in PDF format. Visit www.nfpa.org for more information.

OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL – ONTARIO (OFM)

Contact this office for assistance, if required, when working with local fire departments. OFM's website offers valuable resources in public education, including safety checklists, which may be used with families. Visit their website at www.ofm.gov.on.ca.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES (OACAS)

In 2009, the OACAS produced a practice note on fire safety. To download the Practice Note in English and French, visit www.oacas.org.

VIDEO RESOURCE

No Time to Spare is a video produced by the OFM that demonstrates the importance of having a smoke alarm on every storey. The video is also an excellent educational tool for teenagers and parents but is not generally recommended for younger children.

The video can be accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSwOrxNAHus>, on the OFM website www.ofm.gov.on.ca and/or on www.oacas.org



HELP FOR CHILD FIRE SETTERS

FIRE SAFETY FOR KIDS www.firesafety.gov/kids

This online resource is useful to families and educators about how to discuss with children the risks associated with playing with fire setting materials. The site may also be used with children as it provides games children can play while learning about fire safety.



LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Contact your local fire department as many municipalities offer fire safety education to children. Their websites will often include downloadable resources for children such as colouring books aimed at education and awareness.

THE ARSON PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN (TAPP-C)

TAPP-C is a juvenile fire setter intervention program for children and youth aged 2 – 17. It is a collaborative program that involves both fire services and mental health professionals working with the child and family to change dangerous fire setting behaviours. There is a *Clinician's Manual* and a *Fire Service Educator's Manual* available for the program. The TAPP-C program can be accessed by contacting the local fire department or the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, 416-979-4952. Training can be arranged in your community.

Visit the TAPP-C website for more information, www.tapp-c.com.

Aboriginal TAPP-C is the same program as the original TAPP-C but has been culturally adapted.

WEBSITES

Fire Prevention Canada www.fiprecan.ca

Fire Safety for Kids www.firesafety.gov/kids

Health Canada <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

Kids Health www.kidshealth.org

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca

Office of the Fire Marshal - Ontario www.ofm.gov.on.ca

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Appendix A

FIRE SAFETY TIP SHEET

This tip sheet may be used as a resource with families to guide them in making their homes safer from fire and to reduce the risks of fire related injuries and death by early detection and home escape planning. It is also available to download on the OACAS website at www.oacas.org

SMOKE ALARMS

- ☐ Install working smoke alarms on every storey of the home and outside all sleeping areas. It's the law.
- ☐ For extra protection, install a smoke alarm in every bedroom.
- ☐ Test your smoke alarms once a month.
- ☐ Change smoke alarm batteries annually or whenever the low-battery warning sounds.
- ☐ Replace smoke alarms that are more than ten years old.
- ☐ Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for installing, testing and maintaining smoke alarms.

HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLANNING

- ☐ Develop a home fire escape plan and practice it with the entire family.
- ☐ Make sure everyone knows two ways out of each room, if possible.
- ☐ Determine who will be responsible for helping young children, older adults or anyone else that may need assistance when escaping.
- ☐ Choose a meeting place outside, such as a tree or lamp post, where everyone can be accounted for.
- ☐ Call the fire department from outside the home, from a cell phone or neighbour's home.
- ☐ Once out, stay out. Never re-enter a burning building.
- ☐ Keep all exits in the home clear and easy to use.

MATCHES AND LIGHTERS

- ☐ Keep matches and lighters out of the sight and reach of children.
- ☐ All adult smokers should have only one lighter or a book of matches and they should keep it with them at all times.
- ☐ Teach young children not to touch matches or lighters. They should tell an adult if they find them.
- ☐ If parents suspect their child is involved in inappropriate fireplay, they can call their local fire department for information and assistance.

THINGS TO CONSIDER TO PREVENT FIRE IN YOUR HOME

- ☐ Always stay in the kitchen when you are cooking.
- ☐ Always blow out candles before leaving the room.
- ☐ If anyone in the home smokes, smoke outside.
- ☐ Ensure items that can burn are one metre away from space heaters.
- ☐ Avoid overloading the electrical outlets. Extension cords should be used only as a temporary connection.

Appendix B

HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

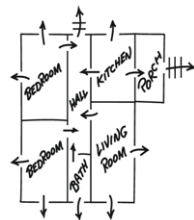
This sample home fire escape plan may be used as a resource with families to guide them in the development of an escape plan. It is also available to download on the OACAS website at www.oacas.org

Develop a home fire escape plan today... It could save your life tonight!

If a fire occurred in your home tonight, would your family get out safely? Everyone must know what to do and where to go when the smoke alarm sounds. Take a few minutes with everyone in your household to make a home fire escape plan, following the instructions below.



1. Draw a floor plan of your home



Use the grid on the back to draw a floor plan of your home. You should draw a plan for each level of your home.

2. Include all possible emergency exits

Draw in all the doors, windows and stairways. This will show you and your family all possible escape routes at a glance. Include any features, such as the roof of a garage or porch, that would help in your escape.

3. Show two ways out of every room, if possible.

The door will be the main exit from each room. However, if the door is blocked by smoke or fire, identify an alternate escape route, which could be a window. Make sure that all windows can open easily and that everyone knows how to escape through them to safety. If windows have security bars, equip them with quick-releasing devices.

4. Does anyone need help to escape?

Decide in advance who will assist the very young, older adults or people with disabilities in your household. A few minutes of planning will save valuable seconds in a real emergency.



5. Choose a meeting place outside

Choose a meeting place a safe distance from your home that everyone will remember. A tree, street light or a neighbour's home are all good choices. In case of fire, everyone will go directly to this meeting place so they can be accounted for.

6. Call the fire department from outside your home

Don't waste valuable seconds calling the fire department from inside your home. Once you have safely escaped, call the fire department from a cell phone or a neighbour's home.

7. Practice your escape

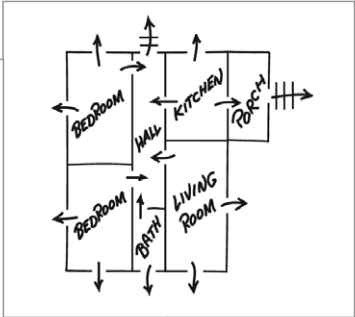
Review the plan with everyone in your household. Walk through the escape routes for each room with the entire family. Use this walk-through exercise to check your escape routes, making sure all exits are practical and easy to use. Then hold a fire drill twice a year and time how long it takes. In a real fire, you must react without hesitation as your escape routes may be quickly blocked by smoke or flames.

Remember:

- Plan two ways out of every room, if possible
- Hold a fire drill twice a year
- Install smoke alarms on every storey of your home and outside all sleeping areas

If you live in a high-rise apartment building, contact the building management for information on your building's fire safety plan.

Draw a floor plan of your home, showing two ways out of every room, if possible.

[illegible]

For more information about home fire escape planning, contact your local fire department.

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