

# Session 1

■ Caregiver

## Fire Safety Begins at Home: Defining and Rewarding Fire-Safe Behaviours

### Session at a glance

- 8 Background
- 9 Goals
- 9 Materials needed
- 10 Joint meeting with caregiver and child
- 10 Describe the intervention program.
- 12 Caregiver alone
- 12 Help the caregiver develop a solid understanding of the importance of stopping his or her child's fire involvement.
- 13 What do we mean by *fire involvement*?
- 13 What framework is best for helping children stop inappropriate fire involvement?
- 14 Help the caregiver understand that most safety behaviours are learned.
- 14 Help the caregiver make rules about the use of matches and lighters or other ignition sources that everyone in the home must follow.
- 15 Help the caregiver get on board with the importance of caregiver control over access to ignition sources in the home.
- 16 Help the caregiver make a plan to get rid of all unnecessary fire-starting materials.
- 18 Help the caregiver get the child actively involved in carrying out the fire-safety plan for the home.
- 19 Help the caregiver understand the importance of rewarding fire-safe behaviours.
- 19 Wrap-up and joint meeting with caregiver and child
- 20 Discuss home practice.

# Background

The majority of children begin their firesetting or inappropriate fire involvement in the home. In addition, many children find the ignition sources for their fire involvement in the home, even when the firesetting occurs outside of the home. More importantly, almost all fatal fires involving children occur in the home. With these findings in mind, the first TAPP-C treatment session focuses on fire safety in the home.

Given the risk of injury associated with fire involvement by a child, one useful way to conceptualize inappropriate fire involvement by a child or teenager is to view fire involvement as the absence of fire-safe behaviours. All children need to learn fire-safe behaviours. They do so by growing up in environments that reinforce the acquisition and use of fire-safe behaviours.

Caregivers and other family members are children's most important teachers. The actions and words of caregivers shape children's attitudes and behaviours. It is important for caregivers to model and help their children learn fire-safe behaviours.

All children need to learn that using fire-starting materials can be dangerous because they have the potential to cause burns, serious injury and sometimes death. Young children need to learn that they are not permitted to touch any fire-starting materials. Older children and teens need to learn that they are not permitted to touch fire-starting materials without permission or supervision. Although most children eventually have formal lessons about fire safety at school, what caregivers do in the home is the first and most important education children receive about fire safety.

In this session, caregivers will learn about their role in helping their children learn fire-safe behaviours. First, caregivers will learn about the importance of having clear rules for all family members about the use of ignition materials. Caregivers will also learn about their central role in controlling access to ignition materials in the home. Towards this end, caregivers will start making a plan (1) to search the home and rid it of unnecessary ignition materials and (2) to decide where to keep any necessary ignition materials so that they are not accessible to children.

Also emphasized is the importance of encouraging the child to assume some responsibility for fire safety in the home and the importance of rewarding the child for doing so.

As well, the child's session focuses on the importance of family fire safety and efforts the child can make to help. Getting the child on board to support the caregiver's efforts to establish control over ignition materials in the home is a critical first step. Like the caregiver, the child will devise a plan to help search the home for ignition materials and will generate a list of potential rewards for doing so.

Clinicians are encouraged to review the Special Issues section, p. 203, before beginning Session 1.

# Goals

- Describe the main goals of the TAPP-C program and its treatment component to the caregiver and child.
- Discuss fire involvement by children as an absence of fire-safe behaviours and stress that safety behaviours are learned.
- Define the child's inappropriate use of ignition materials as fire-dangerous behaviour.
- Define the caregiver's lack of control over access to ignition materials as fire-dangerous behaviour.
- Develop rules about the use of ignition materials in the home.
- Develop rules about the storage of ignition materials in the home.
- Discuss a plan to search for and get rid of all unnecessary fire-starting materials in the home.
- Assist the caregiver to involve the child in fire-safe behaviours.
- Help the caregiver understand the importance of rewarding fire-safe behaviours.
- Wrap up and discuss the home practice activity with the caregiver and the child.



## If short of time

Your main goals are to begin establishing a therapeutic alliance and engaging the caregiver in developing a plan regarding the safe use and storage of ignition sources and accelerants in the home.

# Materials needed

- paper
- pencils
- Session 1 worksheets (p. 21)
- Session 1 progress note (p. 23)