



**NVFC NATIONAL JUNIOR
FIREFIGHTER**

JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

STARTER KIT




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ABOUT THE NATIONAL JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM



Junior firefighter programs give our nation's youth the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical service response organizations in a safe, controlled, educational, and fun way while providing departments with non-operational support and an excellent recruitment mechanism. The National Volunteer Fire Council's (NVFC) National Junior Firefighter Program

supports fire and emergency service departments in

fostering relationships and engaging youth in learning about, and ultimately becoming, members of the emergency services.

The contents of this guide and other resources from the National Junior Firefighter Program are intended to help departments support youth involvement in the fire and emergency services. The NVFC does not advocate youth participating in operational/emergency response activities but recognizes that it is ultimately up to the individual department to determine the activities their youth can participate in and the associated liability that comes with these activities. Departments should consider consulting with a legal advisor or state fire association regarding specific participation or liability regulations within their state or locality.

Visit www.nvfc.org/juniors for more information.

For additional assistance, contact the NVFC at 1-888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) or www.nvfc.org/contact.

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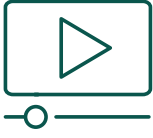


INTRODUCTION

A well-run junior program achieves two critical goals for a fire department. Firstly, and in the short term, it provides the department with needed personnel for non-operational tasks. In the long term, it provides a permanent pipeline for recruitment. Youth also benefit from junior firefighter programs as they build skills that will help them in the fire service and throughout life, such as teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and community service.

So where do you begin? This Junior Firefighter Program Starter Kit is designed to be a turn-key tool to help you

build a solid foundation for your program. It provides step-by-step guidance to bring you from the initial conversation regarding junior firefighter programming in your department to welcoming new recruits through your bay doors. Throughout this guide, you will also find information on additional resources you can utilize to jumpstart the involvement of youth in your organization, find funding, train your junior firefighters, and maintain your program throughout the years.

RESOURCE KEY

 GUIDE	 SAMPLE/ TEMPLATE	 TOOL
 VIDEO	 E-LEARNING	 WEB SITE

STARTING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING PROGRAM

STEP 1

SECURE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT

A well-designed and professionally-run junior firefighter program can add significant value to your department. Not only does it bring in new volunteers, an injection of youth and the energy they bring can invigorate your department for years to come. Traditionally, youth have joined on the heels of their family members, but with changing demographics and increased demands on peoples' time, a program dedicated to 'growing your own membership' will prove a valuable asset.

Whether you are a chief officer trying to determine what resources and personnel you need to start a program or a department member seeking approval to start a program, one thing is certain: support from your organization's leaders and members is crucial. Without solid program leadership and interest from department members, the program cannot be successful. Ensure you have full buy-in from your chief, administrative leaders, and members before formally launching your program.

To obtain this buy-in, you will need to make the case as to why it is important for your department to encourage youth involvement and the positive impact they will have on both your department and the community. Some key points to make include the following:

- A junior program is a great tool for recruiting potential future members and leaders of your organization. This applies to both the junior firefighters and the friends and family that they will introduce to the fire service that may then have interest in joining.

- These young volunteers can help the department with non-operational tasks such as fundraising, events, and fire prevention education while bringing a new perspective and fresh ideas to the table.
- Establishing a youth program will help your department form stronger bonds within your community as you grow a membership that is reflective of the neighborhoods you serve. In return, junior members learn critical skills such as leadership, teamwork, and responsibility.
- Junior programs provide youth with invaluable experience and education in the fire and emergency services, and members of these programs often become lifelong supporters of their local department.
- Consider showing the monetary value of the non-operational support your junior firefighters will provide or the value of the time saved for your operational personnel. The NVFC's Cost Savings Calculator helps demonstrate this value.

You may have to alleviate concerns within your department about having youth present at your facility and events. A successful program has solid leadership that promotes safety first and ensures that there is no negative impact on the overall operation of your organization/department or its primary mission to protect and serve the community.

RESOURCES



NVFC Cost Savings Calculators



National Junior Firefighter Program - Resources for Departments

STARTING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING PROGRAM

STEP 2

ASSESS LIABILITY

It is important to research the liability laws and regulations within your state and locality prior to starting a junior firefighter program. It is in your best interest to consult with your insurance provider as well as with legal counsel before you start a program or change any existing requirements. Your state fire association or state fire marshal's office may also be able to assist you in determining what laws exist in your state regarding youth firefighter programs.

The NVFC does not advocate junior firefighters participating in operational/emergency response activities. However, the decision for youth activities is ultimately up to the individual department. Departments should check with their current insurance provider regarding requirements for youth who are present on their organization's property and/or participants in organization activities or events, regardless of how they are involved.

During an introductory meeting with the recruit and parent or legal guardian, discuss what protocols are in place in the event of an emergency, such as an injury to the youth member, as well as safety standards in place to help prevent these types of emergencies. Typically, a signed waiver of liability that includes a full disclosure

of risks will help protect your department from liability should someone be injured. The parent or legal guardian of the youth participant must sign this form along with the youth participant. Language for consent forms and liability waivers will vary for each department depending on state, local, and insurance requirements. Retain the original copy in the membership file and provide the parent/guardian with a copy of all documents.

Having clear, documented safety standards and procedures that are strictly adhered to can also help minimize liability should an accident or injury occur. Consider developing a supplemental one-page chart or reference sheet that clearly spells out what juniors are allowed and not allowed to do at each given age and post this in a visible location as an ongoing reminder.

In addition, juniors should, although are not required to, submit results of physical exams, much like they do for school-based activities. This ensures that the program advisors are aware of any conditions that may limit the junior's participation or that require conversation. If the junior ultimately becomes a full firefighter later, having documented physical records provides a good baseline of health.

RESOURCES



[Fire Corps Liability Guide: Managing the Unexpected in Fire Corps Activities](#)



[Managing the Unexpected in Fire Corps Activities: A Guide to Fire Corps Liability Issues \(PPT\)](#)



[State Liability Laws for Charitable Organizations and Volunteers](#)



[National Junior Firefighter Program Resources for Departments: Liability and Safety Information](#)

STARTING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING PROGRAM

STEP 3

ONBOARDING ADVISORS

Selecting your department's junior firefighter program advisor(s) may be the most critical decision you will make in the process of developing a youth-centric program. The advisors can make or break the program – from their character to how much effort they put towards the program, how much support they rally around it, how good they are as a mentor, and more. Many of your members will welcome the opportunity to help build the program, but the people selected to work most closely with junior recruits and members need to express the highest level of integrity, honesty, and morality as parents will be entrusting their children to that member's care. Additionally, they should be an effective communicator with an ability to write or adapt, and implement, a training curriculum suitable for your youngest members. They need not be an officer, but they should be someone with the appropriate experience and technical training to ensure that junior firefighters are learning and adhering to your department's SOPs and SOGs.

Set your advisors up for success with these tips:

1. Provide a clearly defined job description with well-defined expectations.
2. Communicate to them expectations for hours in service to include:
 - a. Junior-focused recruitment events
 - b. Operations training that adheres to state child labor laws
 - c. Fire prevention programming
 - d. Service projects in the firehouse and in the larger community
 - e. Public relations and events planning
 - f. Awards and recognition programs
 - g. Interactions with parents and guardians
 - h. Compliance paperwork for department, municipality, and school district needs
 - i. Advocacy to promote the program in the community
3. The department must support these advisors in their own training and compliance as a mandated reporter Entrusted with the care of your most vulnerable members, mandated reporters have a duty to report known or suspected abuse or neglect related to children. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides resources to ensure your advisor, and his/her support staff, have the information that they need to protect junior members as well as adult members of your organization.



j. Compliance paperwork for adherence to *NFPA 1550: Standard for Emergency Responder Health and Safety*

To ensure adequate safety and supervision of the youth members, successful programs should have at least one adult advisor for every 6-7 youth participants (this may vary depending on the ages of youth members). You may need to limit program participation based on the number of department members who commit to serving as advisors. It is important the advisors be familiar with the intricacies of working with teens and be prepared to

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serve as mentors. The NVFC's *Training the Next Generation* online course provides an overview for working with youth volunteers.

In addition to program advisors, you will also need several additional members who are interested in participating in the program as mentors, educators, and in support roles. These members can assist the advisors in implementing the program and training the juniors. If your organization encompasses both fire and EMS, you should ensure there are members within both services who are willing and able to assist with the program.

To protect your junior firefighters as well as your department, conduct background checks on all adults who will be working with your junior firefighters. Also, determine guidelines for interaction between adult advisors/program assistants and junior firefighters. Refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guide *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving*



Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures to assist in this process. You should also consult with your legal representatives before putting these policies and procedures into action.

RESOURCES



NFPA 1550: Standard for Emergency Responder Health and Safety



State Training Resources for Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect



Training the Next Generation



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Resources



Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures

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STEP 4

DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE AGE RANGE

The NVFC recommends a minimum age requirement of at least 8th grade or 14 years old, going up to the age the department requires for full operational membership (usually 18 or 21). However, it is up to each department to determine the age range for their program. Age ranges for programs across the United States include everything between 8-21 years old.

You should work with your organization/department leaders to determine what this range will be for your program. It may be with an initial program, your

department will want to first recruit those 16 and older, as state laws are more generous towards older teens when it comes to permissible hours of service and tasks approved.

Any activity that involves youth members must include sufficient adult supervision. The permissible number of minors supervised by each advisor may be considerably less than the number of adult members per supervisor. The U.S. Department of Labor provides information on national child labor laws; your state's Department of Labor is also a good resource for local information.

RESOURCES



U.S. Department of Labor: Age Requirements



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STEP 5

ESTABLISH WHAT YOUTH MEMBERS CAN AND CANNOT DO

While departments may have individual requirements and special programs, depending on age and experience, the NVFC recommends only non-operational participation by youth members. The final decision lies with your own organization's requirements, local and state child labor laws, and other factors. Before finalizing your organization's program, you should meet with your leadership, insurance carrier, and legal representative to review which activities your participants will and will not be doing.

Consider the following when developing your activity list:

- The NVFC does not advocate youth engaging in fireground/scene operations other than providing support or auxiliary work, such as supplying refreshments, well outside of the “hot zone” or operational area. Also of concern is traffic safety for responders on residential and other roadways. Such concerns may impact your department's decision of where youth are allowed to be during scene operations.
- Youth participants should be supervised at all times and should not act without a supervisor's direction. An adult advisor of your organization's program should always provide direction to youth participants and be ready and able to answer questions. For those who allow members younger than 16, consider “at arms length” as the distance from which they should be from an experienced senior member. Another consideration may include requiring parent attendance at particular trainings.
- The NVFC encourages training youth in the core areas of interest (fire, rescue, or EMS). Classroom-based learning is appropriate for most program participants. For example, classes on CPR, communications, fire safety and prevention, and general fire, rescue, and EMS education can be taught to youth without putting them in situations where they may be injured. Depending on the age and abilities of participants, some programs also offer simulated, hands-on training



in a non-emergency situation, such as staging EMS skills training with mock victims or practicing skills like working with ladders or advancing the hoseline in a safe, controlled, non-fire environment. The NVFC's guide *Core Competencies for the Junior Fire Service* provides step-by-step training examples.

- Assess what needs the department has that juniors can potentially fill, such as organizing Fire Prevention Week activities, conducting fire safety programs in schools, and helping with fundraising events. Consider activities that are mutually beneficial – helping the department/community and alleviating burdens placed on personnel while building skills for the juniors like communication, teamwork, organization, and community service.
- Create leadership opportunities for youth to keep them engaged and help them grow. Many high-performing junior firefighter programs are run by junior officers (with oversight from adult advisors). This helps youth be invested in the group's success and can help relieve the time burden on adult leaders.
- Focusing on health and safety for junior firefighters creates a healthier fire service in the future. Firefighters

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face increased risk of cancer, heart disease, and vehicle crashes. Activities and trainings should emphasize health and safety to instill these in the youth now so they practice them later as full-fledged responders.

RESOURCES



Core Competencies for the Junior Fire Service



Training the Next Generation



National Junior Firefighter Program Resources for Departments: Training



Fire Prevention Week



Fire Corps Volunteer Activity Ideas



NVFC Heart Healthy Firefighter Program



NVFC Share the Load Program

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STEP 6

SET THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS



In addition to age, establish what other requirements youth must meet to participate in your program. Some things to consider include grades, parental permission and involvement, and hours of participation. Have policies in place for what happens if the minimum requirements are not met, including disciplinary actions that will be taken from warnings to dismissal from the program.

- **Application:** Develop a program application that includes the program guidelines and asks for birth date and other demographic/experience information needed to participate in your program. Of primary importance is the understanding that minors cannot be bound to a contract. Parents must be required to sign off on documents such as house rules, township policy agreements, and releases for department officials to communicate with school officials regarding grades, attendance, and behavior. Emergency contact numbers and names should be provided and in officer possession for any training or during any time the minor is in the care of the department.
- **Grades:** The NVFC recommends that participants provide documentation proving the attainment of at least a “C” or passing average in their school

coursework. Organizations may want to align this minimum with school-sponsored extracurricular activity requirements and should monitor grades on a quarterly or bi-annual basis at a minimum. Parents may ask organizations to limit their child’s participation at higher grade averages, and their word should always be the last in these cases. To encourage junior members to focus on school, periodic grade reports should be requested so that department officials can help young members with time management.

- **Parental/Guardian Permission and Involvement:** Full permission from the parent or legal guardian must always be obtained for participants who are under 18 years of age through a written/signed release. Parents should be presented with an accurate overview of your program, what it entails, what their children will learn, and what types of activities they will participate in. They should also be introduced to all members who will work in proximity to their child and if a mentorship model is in place, parents should have the contact information for their child’s assigned mentor. The more proactive you are with parents, the better. Encourage parents/guardians to attend department

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functions, host special monthly or quarterly social nights for parents, and host other special functions for the youth and their parents so the parent is confident in the department's dedication to the program and its members. Consider additional ways to get the parents/guardians involved with the department, such as through an auxiliary or support program like Fire Corps for those who may be interested in joining the department in a non-emergency capacity. Some parents might even be interested in joining the department as a firefighter or EMS provider.

- **Hours of Participation:** Consider whether you want to require your program's members to participate in a certain number or percentage of activities or for

a certain number of hours each month in order to remain an active member. Take into consideration your state, local, and school requirements for when your youth members are allowed to participate. There may also be certain laws or regulations concerning how late at night youth members are allowed/permitted to participate in program activities. Consider selecting specific weeknights and/or a weekend afternoon so that juniors build the time into their schedule. Labeling those as "shift nights" or "weekend shifts" helps standardize language and encourages consideration of the time spent in the firehouse as a responsibility. Understanding the Child Labor Laws for your state is paramount to initiating a successful junior program.

RESOURCES



National Junior Firefighter Program Resources for Departments: Sample Documents



Fire Corps



U.S. Department of Labor: Youth & Young Worker Employment

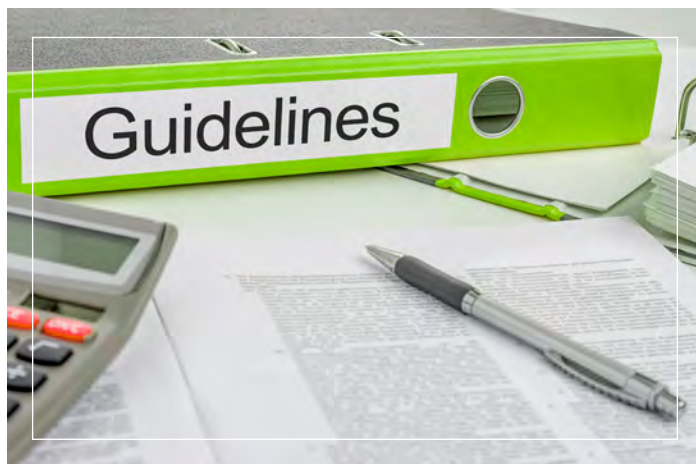
STARTING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING PROGRAM

STEP 7

FORMALIZE THE PROGRAM'S OPERATING GUIDELINES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Once you have determined the age range, activity list, and minimum requirements for youth participants, formalize the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) for your program, which should encompass all of these items. Safety and safe practices should be of highest priority in all SOGs. Make sure all potential youth participants and their parent/guardian receive a copy of these guidelines and are clear on their content.

The content of your program's SOGs and other documents (such as program applications, consent forms, and liability releases) should be customized based on the needs and requirements of your department/organization and community. As noted earlier, posting the SOGs, inclusive of any house rules and involvement hours, is important because it provides adult members with a quick, visible reminder of what the youth can and cannot be doing while in the station. This is particularly important for those members who are not formally involved in the program.



And, of course, posting of the Child Labor Laws is mandatory for any organization that employs youth under the age of 18, and such postings should be made in a heavily trafficked area of the station.

RESOURCES



National Junior Firefighter Program Resources for Departments: Sample Documents



Department of Labor: Child Labor

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STEP 8

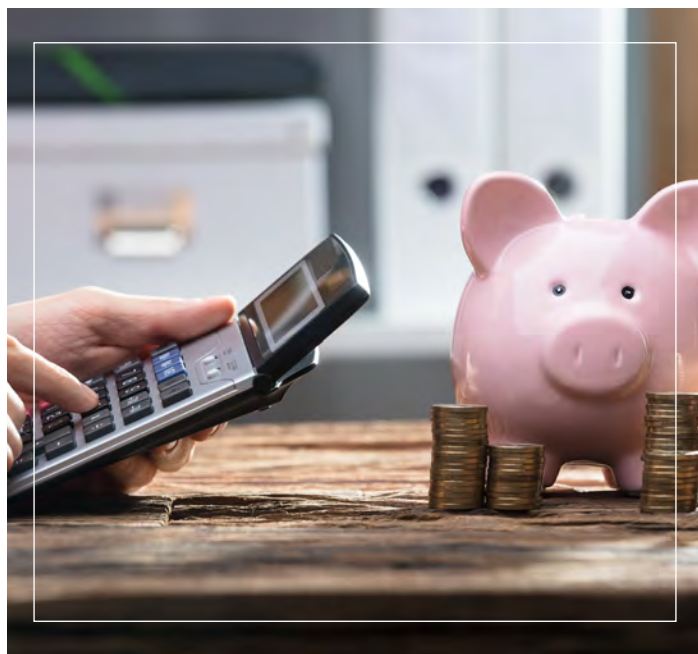
FIND FUNDING

An important piece of establishing a new junior firefighter program is determining where funding will come from to launch and maintain your program. Program costs could include recruitment/outreach materials and advertising, providing t-shirts, printing guides, purchasing materials for training drills, traveling to regional trainings, or providing gear for youth. Many departments don't have a line item in the budget for anything beyond the basics for their junior firefighter program (if that!), but don't let this deter you from implementing your program.

Many programs charge nominal dues from their junior firefighters to help run the program and ensure youth commitment to the program. Fundraisers are another excellent method for securing funding for your program since youth can organize and staff these events. Programs nationwide raise funds through pancake breakfasts and spaghetti dinners, car washes, holiday wreath/tree sales, boot drives, and more.

Local, state, and national grants are also available to support your program. Of particular interest to fire departments nationwide is the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program, a federal grant program through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Designed to assist departments with meeting staffing and response standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (1710 and/or 1720), departments can apply for funding for recruiting, equipping, and training eligible juniors. Grant guidance refers to these programs as "Explorer/cadet" programs, which also include junior firefighter programs. SAFER funds can help support the following initiatives, which prepare the junior to be ready to serve as a responder when they graduate from the program:

- Recruiting juniors and marketing the program
- One station duty uniform for each newly recruited Explorer/cadet per the department's documented uniform policy



- Training (non-immediate danger to life and health [IDLH])
- One set of structural or wildland PPE for new Explorers/cadets that join after the date of the grant award (not to be used in an IDLH atmosphere and does not include SCBA mask/face piece)
- One introductory physical exam per each newly recruited Explorer/cadet

In addition, there may be local businesses willing to provide product or monetary support for your junior firefighter program. The National Junior Firefighter Program's *Sponsorship Toolkit* provides a step-by-step guide and sample documents to help you get funding through donations, grants, and sponsorships from businesses, foundations, nonprofits, and government entities to start your program and then maintain your program as it grows. The NVFC also has a course on *Grant Writing for the Fire and Emergency Services* available in the Virtual Classroom to help with writing a successful grant narrative.

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RESOURCES



National Junior Firefighter Program: Sponsorship Toolkit



Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant



Grant Writing for the Fire and Emergency Services



STARTING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING PROGRAM

STEP 9

RECRUIT YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

You've done the hard work of building your program – now ask youth to come join! Once you have established the framework for your junior firefighter program, it is time to recruit youth members. For this, you can look to the NVFC, community, department members, schools, and social media.

Before you start recruiting, create a specific name and vision statement for your program that can be used for outreach purposes. A good vision statement should be catchy, quickly relay what the program is about, and motivate youth to want to be a part of the program. Recruitment of youth requires flexibility. Today's youth access information mainly through the internet, and specifically, social media. This requires that departments meet youth 'where they are,' and utilize a dynamic approach that captures and keeps the attention of a generation that is always looking for the next great thing. Because there are plenty of competing options for their time, such as sports, music, afterschool and summer jobs, and school, as well as any number of volunteer opportunities, departments must be novel in their approach and employ a 'see yourself here' tactic. This is particularly important for departments who seek diversity and to have a membership that reflects the makeup of the community served.

Here are a few good places to start looking for youth members for your program.

- **NVFC:** The NVFC should be your first stop for organizing youth outreach programming.
 - The NVFC offers the Make Me A Firefighter national recruitment campaign, which includes a department portal where you can post your volunteer opportunities as well as use a materials generator to customize recruitment materials for your local needs. In addition, you can use the invitation generator to invite local youth to an information or orientation event regarding the program.

- The NVFC National Junior Firefighter Program has resources for recruiting juniors, including a junior recruitment video and a list of recruitment ideas.
- The NVFC's Virtual Classroom offers a variety of recruitment resources, including the webinar *Mentoring Volunteer Firefighters and Leaders: Why You Should Care*, which discusses how department leaders can utilize mentorship as a volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention tool.

- **Community:** There are many ways to connect with your community in order to recruit youth members. Some ideas include the following:
 - Outreach to and from partnerships with existing youth organizations, such as 4H, Scouting groups, athletic teams, clubs, and religious groups. Many organizations require that their participants 'give back' to their community in singular days of service; be sure to communicate that your department is open to receiving volunteers for the day, and use the opportunity to teach visitors what your membership does. Consider a small gift that includes contact information about joining the department, such as a pen with the department's name and slogan on it.
 - Research neighborhood block parties and other local celebrations. Reach out to offer to bring a truck, and have members engage party goers by showing off gear and equipment. Holiday events like tree lighting, Santa Runs, and 4th of July parades are great times to engage youth and their parents. Of course, bring your current junior members along in uniform so that youth see their peers 'in action.'
- **Department Members:** Your department's members can also be great recruiters. Remember to reach out to those within your organization when recruiting youth members and utilize their connections within your community.

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- Existing adult members may have children who are interested in getting involved in the organization in a more formal manner. These youth (and their friends) may also be an excellent source of word-of-mouth marketing.

- Current members of your youth organization are also a great marketing resource. Consider creating internal rewards and recognition for youth who recruit new members to your program.

■ **Schools:** Fire department partnerships with schools serve a multitude of purposes, not the least of which is the creation and maintenance of a pipeline of new recruits. A side note: consider who you bring to school events. It's no surprise that when we see people that look like us in particular roles, we are more likely to see ourselves in that uniform.

- Start 'em young! At the elementary school level, provide fire prevention and home safety programming, engage classes in 'firefighter read aloud' programs, or swing into the parking lot during a planned recess for a touch-a-truck and meet-a-firefighter event. Don't limit yourself to Fire Prevention Week in October – every month provides an opportunity to engage young ones.

- Visit middle and high schools for Career Day events and emphasize the life and career skills they will learn as part of the junior firefighter program.

- Arrange to teach a lesson in a science class on basic fire dynamics or kitchen safety. Better still, set up one of your juniors to instruct, as that enables younger students to see how quickly they can be a member of your team, and because students are far more likely to listen to peers than adults. Be sure to bring along some marketing material, including a paper application with an introductory letter from the chief for those that are of minimum age.

- High school recruitment opportunities abound! Schools are required to adhere to state standards, and many have standards that are directly in line with career and technical education programming. In addition, schools increasingly are looking for opportunities to encourage youth to get job training experience as part of the school day.

Getting your department's foot in the door opens up a host of possibilities. Some ideas include:

- Facilitate fire prevention and safety events for the science department.

- Encourage schools to create a Student Safety Team to assist with fire drills.

- Ask to have a table or to present at school events such as Activities and Jobs Fairs (have your own juniors staff the table if possible).

- Ensure that students entering county or local vocational/technical high school programs know how to join your department to start putting their newly learned skills to use.

- Advertise your department as a site for school-required community service projects.

- Enlist a teacher to start an emergency services club and provide a school-based hub for juniors from various departments to interact.

- Invite guidance counselors to the station for a tour and an information session about your junior program so that they can help identify strong candidates to send your way.

- Coordinate an onsite fire service vocational program in conjunction with a local community college or fire training academy.

- Discuss with a school official how the work juniors do outside of school in the form of calls, training, and certification courses may fit the category of 'independent study' and qualify students for academic credit.

- Hang flyers or share information for digital bulletin boards that many schools utilize.

■ **Traditional Media:** While traditional media may reach parents and teachers more than youth, it can still be effective in raising community awareness about the program so the information can then be passed on to your target audience. Submitting press releases to local news outlets, inviting local media to junior training and events, and asking local media partners to feature the program in their broadcasts, publication, or web site can help increase interest in the program.

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■ **Social Media and Web Site:** The internet may be the most cost-effective, and fastest, way to ensure that your recruitment efforts reach the right audience.

- Department web sites are a good way to communicate a comprehensive message about what you do and how you do it. Have a designated page for your junior firefighter program that is easy to find and includes a clear call-to-action to join. Use lots of photographs of members and juniors in action and be calculated with the text you include. As in all recruiting efforts, the message should remain positive and should use active words like ‘join,’ ‘contribute,’ ‘serve,’ and ‘lead’ that inspire readers to act. Avoid any wording along the lines of “we need you” as that message can be perceived as the department is struggling and will not necessarily be around in the long term. Include the types of activities juniors do, the benefits of joining, a volunteer application, and point of contact for inquiries.

- Facebook has considerable community reach, though largely to a mature audience. Resharing posts from other local organizations like your library and your school district, and even a local swim club or the like, can help you attract followers. In addition to your regular content, work in posts about the junior firefighter program, achievements your juniors have (such as their role in winning a baseball game, their college decision, or wishing them a happy birthday),

profiles of your juniors and their thoughts on what it means to be a junior firefighter, and photos of activities and training your juniors complete. Make sure to include a recruitment message with the posts so others can join in the fun!

- Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok enjoy a great deal of youth market attention. Action-packed photos and music-filled video clips garner the attention of youth who are used to a quick scroll through sites, and the use of hashtags provide your department with a curated audience who are looking for what you share, such as #communityservice #firefighting #volunteerism. Remember that Generation Z does not know a world without the internet, and research shows that by high school this audience may spend up to 60% of their day scrolling through their favorite sites.

- Keeping up with social media and developing relevant content may seem like a burdensome task, but it doesn’t have to be. Enlist the help of your juniors to build and curate content for your sites – it keeps them engaged while ensuring your posts keep up with the latest trends. Make sure to have clear SOPs/SOGs regarding social media use and that juniors are trained on these, and have an adult advisor supervise the pages. As post commentary can go sideways, it is imperative that the messages generated from your department are accurate, factual, and reflect the best of what you see your department to be.

RESOURCES



Make Me a Firefighter National Recruitment Campaign



National Junior Firefighter Program Recruitment Video



Mentoring Volunteer Firefighters and Leaders: Why You Should Care



National Junior Firefighter Program Resources for Departments: Marketing and Recruitment

STARTING A JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING PROGRAM

STEP 10

UTILIZE RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN YOUR PROGRAM

The steps laid out in this Starter Kit will help you launch a sustainable junior firefighter program. The next, continuous step is to maintain and grow your program. You can refer back to several of the sections in this guide (along with their corresponding resources) as you seek new recruits each year, adapt activities and training to meet your capacity and members' needs, and seek ongoing funding.

Perhaps the most important factor is keeping your youth engaged by making this a safe, fun, and educational environment. Continue to monitor state and national regulations regarding youth programs and make adjustments as needed.

It is also important to remember when developing and implementing a junior firefighter program that you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Utilize existing resources and adapt them to your program's needs. The National Junior Firefighter Program is a great place to start. As referenced throughout this Starter Kit, the web site offers sample documents, activity ideas, recruitment ideas, training, and more. The national office staff is also available to help with questions.



Another source that may be helpful is the Fire & EMS Career Exploring program. Whether or not you choose to affiliate your program with the Explorer program, you can still utilize their "New Unit Playbook" to get ideas when starting your program.

Other resources that may be helpful include your state firefighter association, state fire marshal's office, and other fire departments in your region that already have a junior firefighter program in place.

We wish you the best of luck on your new program!

RESOURCES



National Junior Firefighter Program



Fire/EMS Career Exploring



NVFC List of State Firefighter Associations



**NVFC NATIONAL JUNIOR
FIREFIGHTER**

NVFC National Junior Firefighter Program

1-888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832)

www.nvfc.org/juniors

www.nvfc.org/contact