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Coordinated Assessment System Policies & Procedures

Purpose/goals

Numerous organizations and agencies in Monmouth County offer a variety of resources and services to homeless families and individuals. The MCHSC seeks to insure the resolution of immediate housing crises, and the facilitation of the transition from homeless to stability in permanent, affordable and safe housing. For this reason, and in response to guidance and direction provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the MCHSC has implemented a coordinated assessment process that includes Centralized Intake for homeless persons and a Housing Navigator to facilitate the access to permanent housing.

Key Definitions

- A. **Continuum of Care:** The Monmouth County Continuum of Care is the recipient of annual HUD funding for the provision of supported housing. The Monmouth County Homeless Systems Collaborative is a function of the Continuum of Care. All agencies and organizations receiving funding through the Monmouth County CoC are required to follow this procedure for coordinated assessment.
- B. **Centralized Intake Agency:** The Monmouth County Division of Social Services (MCDSS) is designated the Centralized Intake Agency for families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Monmouth County. This designation was made by the HSC due to the variety of services available at MCDSS and the historical expertise of DSS in addressing homelessness.
- C. **Chronically Homeless Household:**
- D. **Homeless Household:**
- E. **Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):** HMIS is the information system mandated by HUD for all agencies who receive federal funding for homelessness.
- F. **Housing First model:** Housing First is the service model required by HUD. The Housing First model prioritizes the goal of placement in permanent housing without added caveats and conditions.
- G. **Housing Navigator:** The Mental Health Association of Monmouth County is the designated Housing Navigator Agency. DSS will refer all homeless individuals and families who are in need of permanent housing to the designated Housing Navigator agency.

Coverage area & applicability

The Centralized Intake System shall cover the Monmouth County geographic area. All persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness within the Monmouth County boundaries will be eligible to connect with the Centralized Intake Agency and Housing Navigator Agency for assessment and referral to services. No person shall be turned away from the Centralized Intake System based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability. In addition, no person shall be turned away based on engagement history, residency, participation in services/treatment or income.

The Centralized Intake System is designed to serve as an inclusive process to assess needs and make appropriate referrals based on those needs and eligibility. The Centralized Intake System shall work to affirmatively further fair housing through active engagement and outreach to eligible populations, partnerships with community providers serving eligible populations that have historically lower rates of engagement, and access to translation services for those with limited English proficiency.

All Monmouth County programs receiving funding through the Continuum of Care (CoC), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Social Services for the Homeless (SSH), or Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) shall be required to participate in the Centralized Intake System. All other community programs serving the homeless population funded through other sources are welcome and strongly encouraged to participate in the Centralized Intake System.

Target Population

The Centralized Intake System is designed to serve all persons experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Monmouth County. The system may make referrals, but is not designed to serve those looking for affordable housing without a specific housing stability crisis.

Those at risk of homelessness are defined as:

An individual or family who:

- i. Has an annual income below 30% of median family income for the area; AND*
- ii. Does not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place defined in Category 1 of the "homeless" definition; AND*
- iii. Meets one of the following conditions:*
 - a. Has moved because of economic reasons 2 or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for assistance; OR*
 - b. Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship; OR*
 - c. Has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance; OR*
 - d. Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost is not paid for by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals; OR*

- e. *Lives in an SRO or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than 2 persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than one and a half persons per room; OR*
- f. *Is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care; OR*
- g. *Otherwise lives in housing that has characteristics associated with instability and an increased risk of homelessness, as identified in the recipient's approved Con Plan*

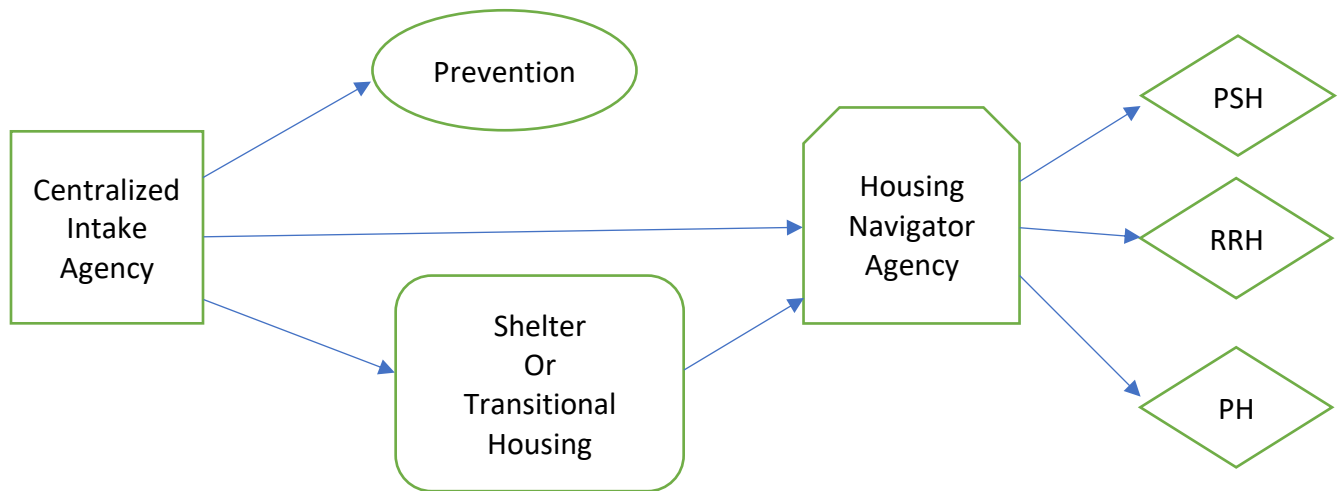
Homelessness is defined as:

1. *Literally Homeless - Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:*
 - a. *Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation;*
 - b. *Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or*
 - c. *Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution*
2. *Imminent Risk of Homelessness - Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:*
 - a. *Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance;*
 - b. *No subsequent residence has been identified; and*
 - c. *The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing*
3. *Homeless under other Federal Statutes - Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:*
 - a. *Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes;*
 - b. *Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application;*
 - c. *Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during in the preceding 60 days; and*
 - d. *Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers*
4. *Fleeing/Attempting to flee DV - Any individual or family who:*
 - a. *Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence;*
 - b. *Has no other residence; and*
 - c. *Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing*

The Centralized intake Agency shall assess and refer all households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. There shall be no disqualifying criteria for the assessment and referral process. All households within the Monmouth County geographic region shall be assessed and referred regardless of residency, income, history of program participation, participation in services, criminal background, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability or any other factor.

System Flowchart

The Centralized Intake Agency shall serve as the point of entry into shelter and prevention services in Monmouth County. The Housing Navigator Agency shall serve as the point of exit from homelessness to permanent housing in the region. All households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness shall be referred to the Centralized Intake Agency which is responsible for diversion, shelter referral/placement, and referral to the Housing Navigator agency. The Housing Navigator Agency shall be responsible for completing prioritization assessments on all homeless households and connecting households to permanent housing.



CIA role/general responsibilities

The Centralized Intake Agency shall serve as the primary entry point into the homeless service system in Monmouth County. The CIA shall streamline access to shelter and diversion programs based on client eligibility and shall serve as the primary referral source to the centralized exit services provided through the Housing Navigator Agency.

Intake/Referral process

Any agency, individual or organization may make a referral to the Centralized Intake Agency for households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Households may also directly access the Centralized Intake Agency without a referral by going to one of the office locations or calling the Homeless Intake Unit. The Centralized Intake Agency can be accessed through their office locations:

3000 Kozloski Road Freehold, NJ 07728	2405 Route 66 Ocean Township, NJ 07712
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Or the Centralized Intake Agency can be access by phone at: 732-431-6000 ext. 613

Referrals via phone must provide the following information to the Centralized Intake Agency:

- Name
- Family Size
- Household Income
- Social Security Number

For referrals received by phone, the CIA shall complete a diversion assessment to determine if the household can avoid entrance into the homeless service system. If appropriate, diverted households may be connected to prevention resources.

In the event the household cannot be diverted from homelessness, the CIA shall check to determine the household's preliminary eligibility for Emergency Assistance through TANF or GA. If the household is deemed to have preliminary eligibility, the CIA shall arrange for the household to have a face to face appointment at one of the CIA office locations.

If the household is found to be ineligible for Emergency Assistance placement, the CIA may arrange for the household to have a face to face appointment at one of their locations, or may make referrals to community sheltering programs for which the household is eligible.

Access

The Centralized Intake Agency shall have at least 1 physical location and phone access. The CIA shall make accommodations for after hours contacts which may include on-call staff. The CIA shall ensure full coverage of the CoC's geographic region and shall make accommodations as necessary for households outside of the reach of the physical office locations.

The CIA shall access translation services through ____ for households with limited English proficiency to ensure all households experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness have equal access to system services.

CIA staff shall participate in cultural competency training to ensure a well rounded understanding of how to engage and work with populations that have traditionally had limited access to services.

Forms/assessment tools

The Centralized Intake Agency shall first work to divert households from the homeless service system wherever possible. The CIA shall complete the diversion questionnaire (See Appendix A) will all households seeking assistance.

When it is determined that a household cannot be diverted from the homeless service system, the Centralized Intake Agency shall complete an eligibility screening for shelter placement and/or referral. The eligibility screening tool (See Appendix B) shall capture basic household demographic information, household income, criminal background and homeless history.

In addition to the assessment tools, the Centralized Intake Agency shall request signatures on a release of information form enabling the CIA to communicate directly with community service providers they intend to make referrals to. If a household refuses to sign the release of information form the Centralized Intake Agency may complete the assessments, provide placement for programs which the CIA has authorization for the enrollment process, or provide the contact information for other community programs for which the household is eligible for.

Data entry

All client information for households assessed and referred by the Centralized Intake Agency shall be recorded in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The Centralized Intake Agency shall record and track all households that have been diverted, referred, lost contact with, and those for which no options are available. All HMIS data entry must be completed within 3 days of assessment. The client data collected shall be based on the Monmouth HSC approved CIA intake/assessment form. (See Appendix C)

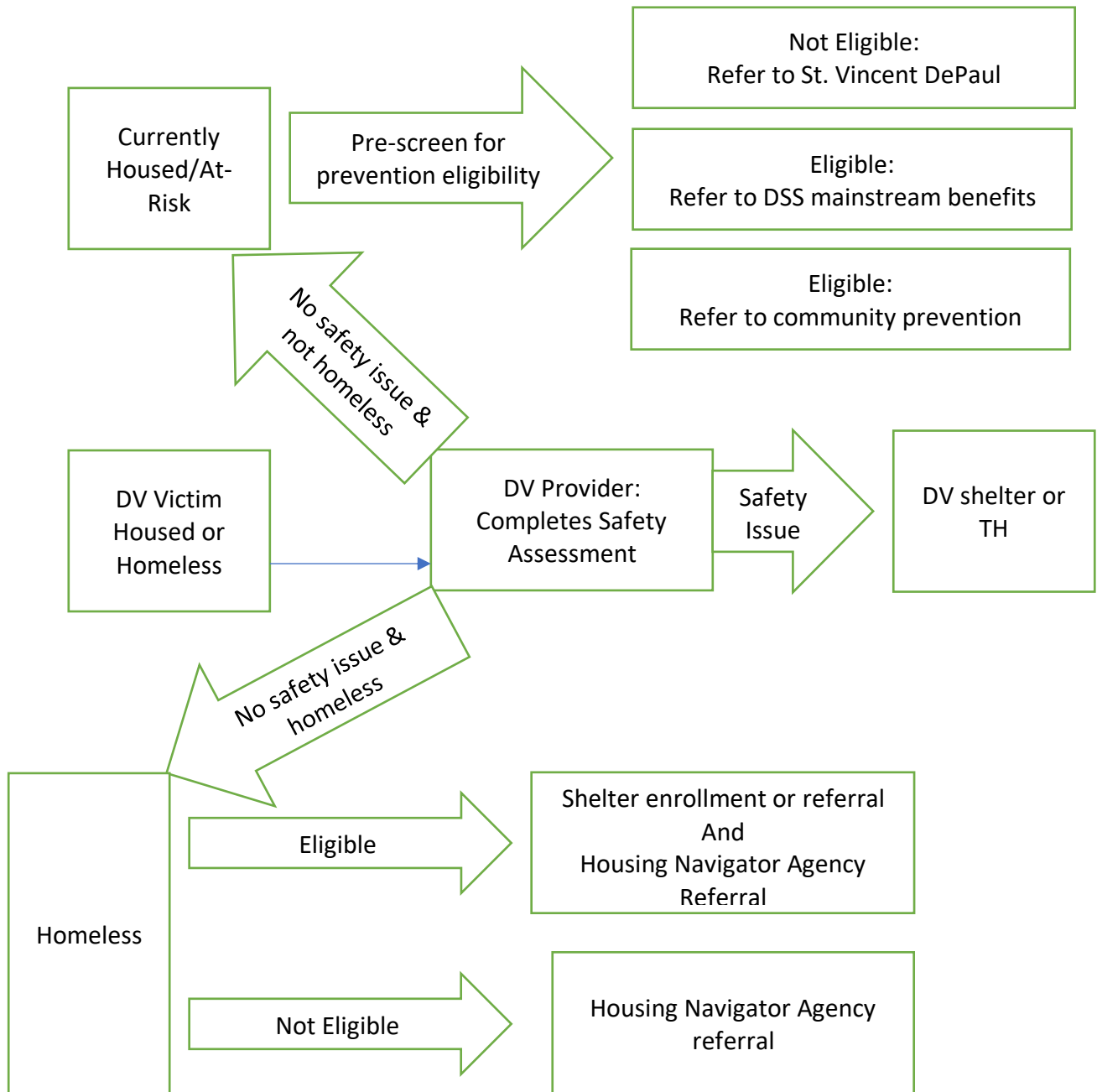
The CIA shall obtain signatures on the HMIS consent form for all households for which they complete diversion and eligibility assessments on.

If a household refuses to sign the HMIS consent form, the CIA may still go through with the diversion and eligibility assessment and enter household information into HMIS, however client data sharing must be set to “no sharing”.

Refusal to share information in HMIS or with other community agencies shall not prohibit households from receiving services for which they are eligible.

Decision making tree

The Centralized Intake shall complete the Diversion Assessment with all households seeking assistance. Once the Diversion Assessment has been completed, the Centralized Intake Agency shall make referrals as follows based on household eligibility:



Prioritization

The Centralized Intake shall complete the diversion assessment on all households seeking assistance. Households not currently homeless but in need of assistance shall be referred to prevention programs in the community. Homeless households shall be referred to appropriate sheltering options and to the Housing Navigator Agency. Within the scope of program eligibility, the Centralized Intake Agency shall seek to prioritize unsheltered households with sheltering services as appropriate.

Referral/Placement process

Upon completion of the eligibility review, the Centralized Intake Agency shall make referrals to community resources based on household need. The Centralized Intake Agency shall submit the appropriate referral form with all households referred to prevention services, shelter and the Housing Navigator Agency. The referral forms shall be sent via secure electronic transmittal. Referrals should be sent immediately, but must be sent within 24 hours of client assessment. The referral shall include the standard referral form (See Appendix D) along with the HMIS data sharing consent form (See Appendix E) and may include program specific intake forms that have been provided to the Centralized Intake Agency.

Special populations procedures

The Centralized Intake Agency shall complete the diversion questionnaire which seeks to determine immediate homeless need and domestic violence status. When a household identifies an issue with domestic violence, the Centralized Intake Agency immediately refers them to the DV provider. The Centralized Intake Agency shall collect client information for those identifying DV issues as they would with any other household. Data entered in HMIS for DV households shall be set as no sharing. Upon receipt of referral, the DV provider shall complete an assessment of the household's safety needs. If it is determined that the household has an immediate safety need, the DV provider will move forward with enrolling the household in the most appropriate DV program in the region or in neighboring regions as appropriate. If the household is determined not to have an immediate safety need, the DV provider will connect them to services provided by the DV agency and refer them back to the Centralized Intake Agency for connection to mainstream shelters in the community.

Community partnerships/agreements

The Centralized Intake Agency shall work collaboratively with community providers to ensure a seamless referral and transition process to services within Monmouth County. The Centralized Intake Agency shall enter into Memorandums of Understanding with three categories of agencies. These MOUs shall be tailored to meet the specific requirements of the agencies based on the services provided, but shall spell out the general communication procedures and service provision expectations of the agencies involved. The following types of MOUs shall be maintained by the Centralized Intake Agency:

1. Prevention Resources – The Centralized Intake Agency shall enter into MOUs with agencies providing prevention services (financial and other services) designed to keep people in housing. In general, the Centralized Intake Agency shall be responsible for

diverting those in housing crisis from the homeless service system. Upon completion of the diversion questionnaire, the Centralized Intake Agency shall review household eligibility for prevention services and provide households information for each prevention program for which they are eligible. If the Centralized Intake Agency is able to obtain a signature on the release of information form from the client seeking assistance, they shall call or send a secure email or fax to the prevention agency using the appropriate referral form indicating that they are referring a potentially eligible client. The prevention agency shall make contact with the client referred within 48 hours. The prevention agency shall notify the centralized intake agency of the status of the client referred (accepted or denied) within 48 hours of initial contact. If the client is working with multiple prevention agencies, those agencies shall be responsible for coordinating the assistance provided.

2. Shelter Resources – The Centralized Intake Agency shall enter into MOUs with all agencies providing shelter in the region (ES & TH). There will be two types of MOUs the Centralized Intake Agency shall maintain, enrollment MOUs and referral MOUs. For sheltering programs where the Centralized Intake Agency has the authority to enroll eligible households, the Centralized Intake Agency shall notify the sheltering program by phone and/or secure electronic transmission, when a new client has been approved/enrolled in the program. The sheltering programs will be responsible for confirming with the Centralized Intake Agency the vacancy rates on a weekly basis. For sheltering programs where the Centralized Intake Agency does not have authority for enrollment, a referral will be sent to the programs for which the client is eligible. The Centralized Intake Agency shall provide detailed information about the sheltering programs for which the client is eligible. If the clients sign a release of information form, the Centralized Intake Agency shall complete a referral using the appropriate form and notify the sheltering program via phone or secure electronic transmission of a coming referral. The sheltering agency shall attempt to contact the client within 48 hours of receiving a referral and shall notify the centralized intake agency within 48 hours of the client's status (accepted or denied). The sheltering programs will be responsible for notifying the Centralized Intake Agency of vacancies on a weekly basis and/or as soon as a vacancy occurs.
3. Housing Navigator Agency – The Centralized Intake Agency shall enter into an MOU with the Housing Navigator Agency referring only those households that are literally homeless at the time of connection to the Centralized Intake Agency. The Centralized Intake Agency shall obtain client signatures on the HMIS data sharing form and release of information form. If a client refuses to sign the release of information form, the Centralized Intake Agency will provide them with the information about how to connect with the Housing Navigator Agency. If a client signs the release of information form, the Centralized Intake Agency shall send the referral to the Housing Navigator Agency along with a copy of the HMIS data sharing form by secure electronic transmission. The Centralized Intake Agency shall notify the Housing Navigator Agency of all homeless clients they have made contact with on a daily basis through a standard log. The log shall indicate clients that have signed a release of information and those that have not as well as the sheltering locations to which they have been referred. The Housing

Navigator Agency shall use this information to ensure outreach is done to all households experiencing homeless to complete the prioritization assessment.

Service database maintenance

All agencies providing services in Monmouth County will be responsible for entering and updating their service and eligibility criteria on the Monmouth ResourceNet website. This website shall be used by the Centralized Intake Agency and other community providers to ensure clients are provided with appropriate referrals.

Refusal of Service procedures

All clients seeking assistance shall have the right to refuse services offered through the Centralized Intake Agency or any partner agencies. A refusal of services may not be used to prohibit future enrollment in programs offered through the Monmouth County Homeless System. Refusal of services may not be held against clients if they re-engage with the system at a later date. If a client re-engages with the Centralized Intake Agency after refusing the initial offer of services, the Centralized Intake Agency will complete the diversion and eligibility screening again as circumstances may have changed between dates of engagement.

Return to CIA procedures

If a household is successfully referred to a community provider but comes back to the Centralized Intake Agency, the agency shall first complete a consumer look up in HMIS to determine if the household is currently engaged with any providers in the system. If the household is engaged with a community provider, with the household's permission, the Centralized Intake Agency may reach out to that provider to determine what additional services/resources are necessary to successfully resolve the household's housing issue. If the household is not currently engaged with a provider or refuses to provide permission to contact that provider, the Centralized Intake Agency shall complete the diversion and eligibility assessment, as done at first contact, and make referrals as appropriate.

HNA role/general responsibilities

The Housing Navigator Agency shall be responsible for completing a prioritization assessment and housing barrier assessment for all households experiencing homelessness in Monmouth County. The Housing Navigator Agency's role will be to assist households in exiting the system by obtaining stable permanent housing. In order to accomplish this, the Housing Navigator Agency shall:

- Maintain a listing of affordable housing opportunities in Monmouth County
- Manage a prioritized waiting list of clients seeking housing
- Provide appropriate services to walk clients seeking assistance through the process of obtaining permanent housing

Permanent housing can take many forms, including supportive housing, rapid re-housing and affordable housing.

Intake process

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