

Meeting The Educational Needs Of Students In The Child Welfare System

A Tool for School Administrators, Guidance
Counselors, and Educators

Juvenile Law Center and Education Law Center

This training is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania
Developmental Disabilities Council



I. Problem

II. Solution

III. Tools

IV. Next Steps

What is the Child Welfare System?

- Government system that is responsible for taking care of children who are abused or neglected, or whose parents are not able to take care of them.
 - ▣ Office of Children, Youth, and Families: 1 per county
 - ▣ Dependency = in need of care or supervision
 - ▣ Dependency ≠ Substitute Care

Placements

- foster family homes
- foster homes of relatives
- group homes
- emergency shelters
- residential facilities
- child care institutions
- pre-adoptive homes

Who is in the system?

- 400,000+ in substitute care
 - **260,000+ are school age**
 - 16% = 6+ placements
 - 14% = 4-5 placements
 - 35% = 2-3 placements
 - 35% = 1 placement

* Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) FY 2009 data (October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009).



VISUALIZING THE CHALLENGE

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

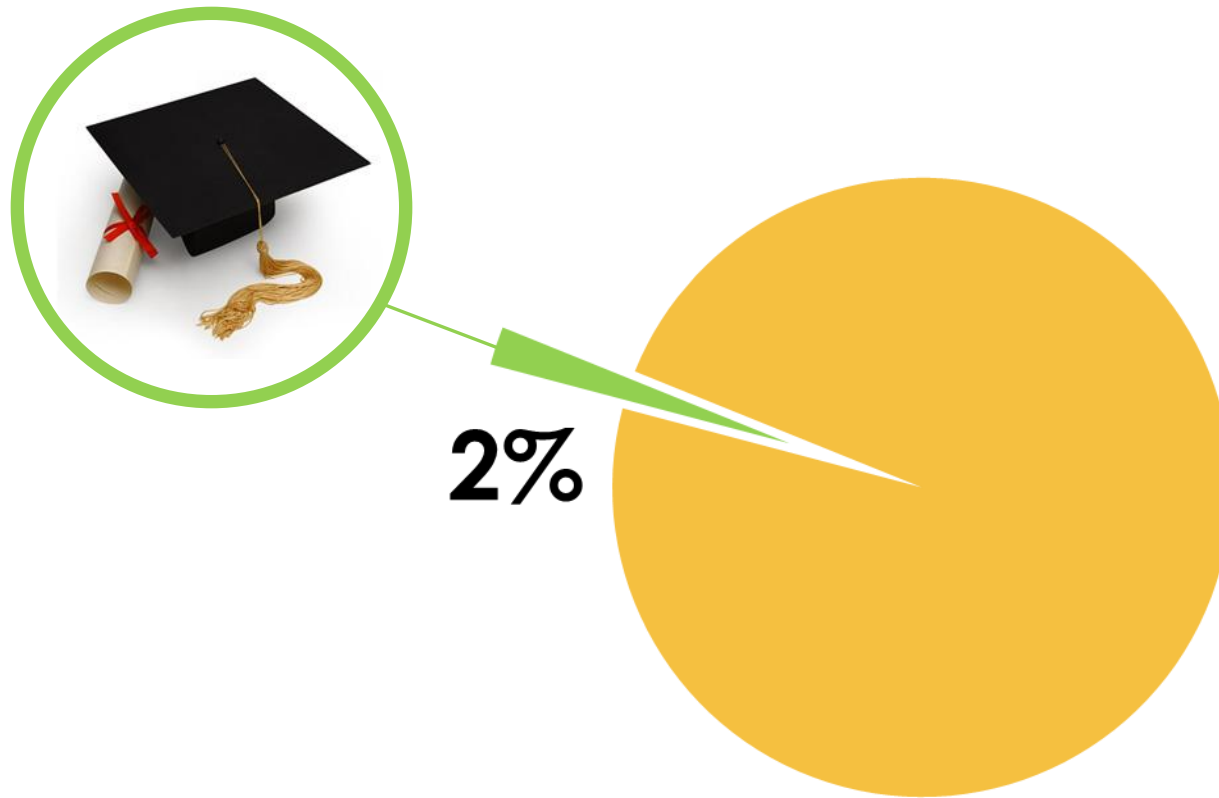


Less than 50%

of high school students in care graduate



EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE



EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

“youth in foster care are **2.5** [to] **3.5** [times]
more likely to be receiving special education services
than their non foster care peers.” *

*National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, Education is the Lifeline for Youth in Care.



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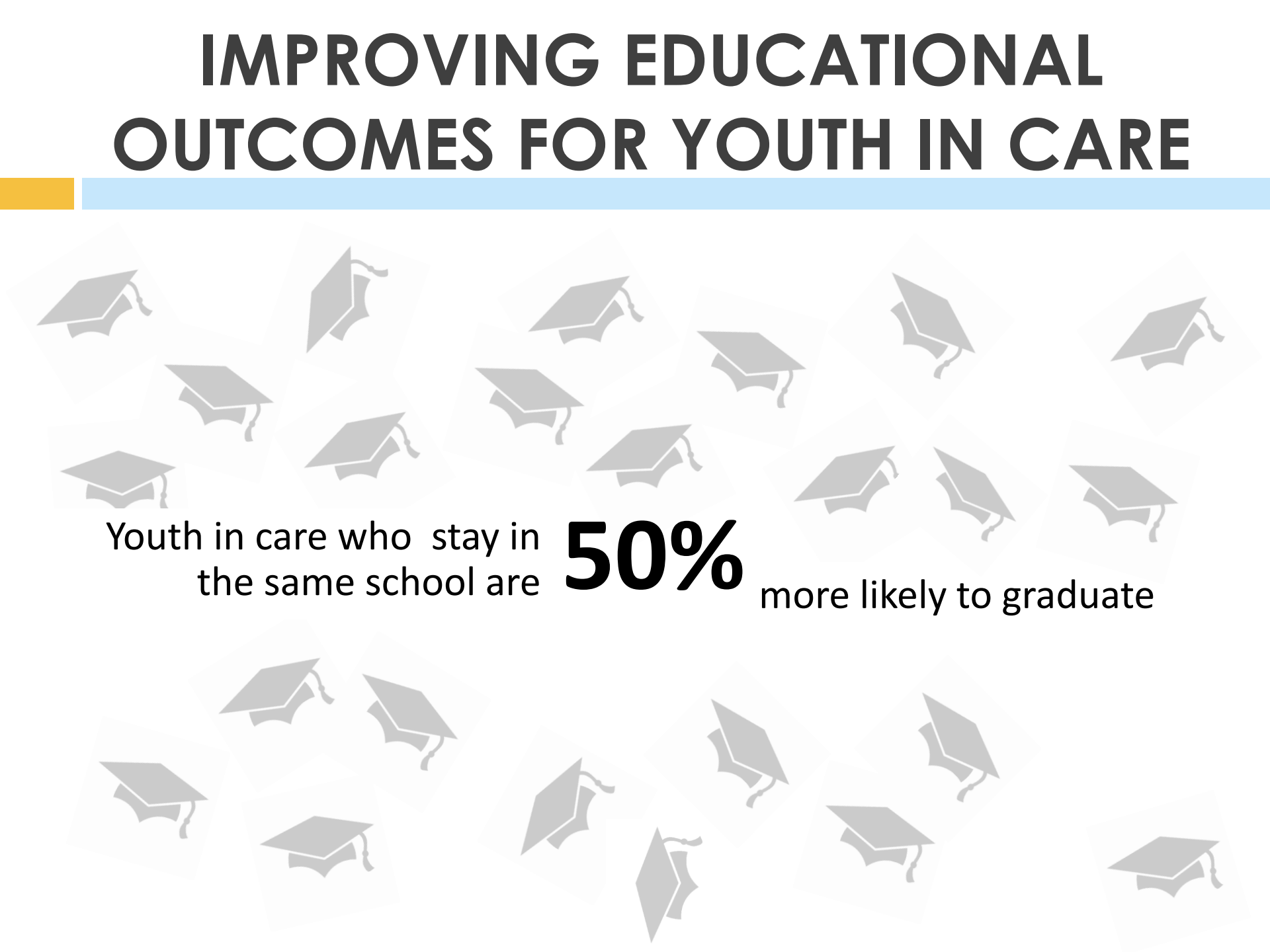
IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

Youth in care who are
connected to mentors are

3x

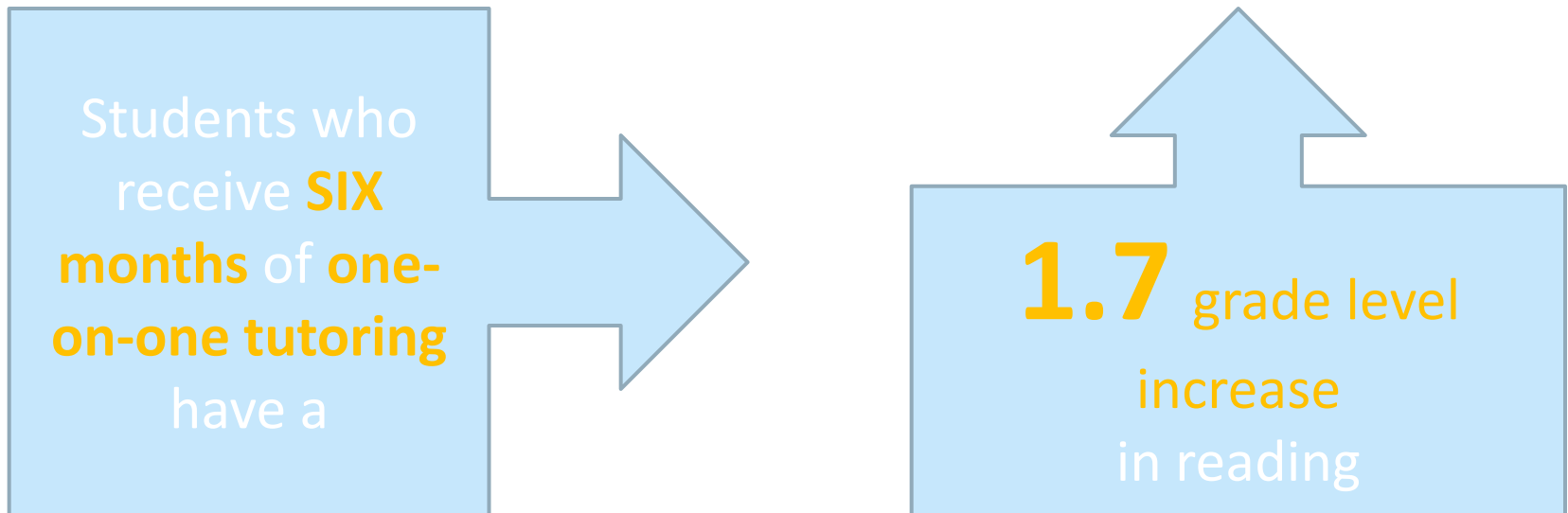
as likely to graduate than
those who are not

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

The background of the slide is decorated with numerous light gray graduation caps (mortarboards) scattered across the page. A horizontal bar at the top consists of a yellow segment on the left and a light blue segment on the right.

Youth in care who stay in
the same school are **50%** more likely to graduate

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN CARE

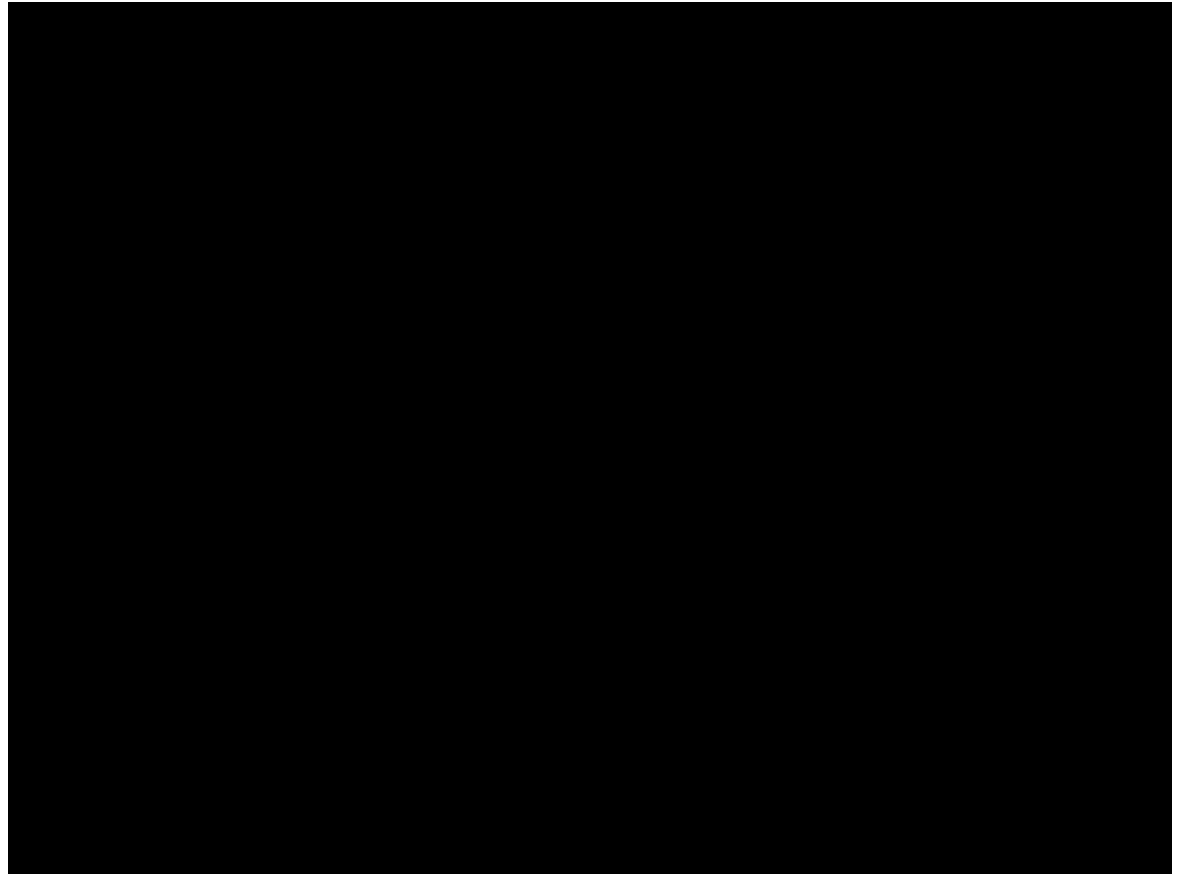


EDUCATION & FOSTER CARE

Video Excerpt
from:

**Becoming
Visible:
Unlocking the
Potential of
Foster
Children and
Youth**

*Developed by
the Stuart
Foundation*



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

- **What were some of the challenges the youth faced?**
- **What were some interventions discussed?**
- **What in the video resembles the experience of you, your students, or your school?**



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EDUCATORS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“I am the only one in my family to graduate high school. My school counselor really helped – calling me every day, giving me pencils and paper and a daily planner. She taught me study skills. She had a good life and showed me the way.”*

*from Casey Family Programs, [A Roadmap for Learning](#)

**SIX ACTS AN EDUCATOR
CAN TAKE TO HELP A
CHILD IN CARE SUCCEED
IN SCHOOL**

1.

WELCOME THE STUDENT TO THE SCHOOL

- Protect Student's Privacy
- Be inclusive
- Watch for discrimination
- Develop Graduation Plan

2.

ENSURE ADULT SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT'S EDUCATION

- Education Decision Maker
- Mentors
- Consider Family's Privacy

3.

ENGAGE THE STUDENT IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITIES

- Talk with student
- Connect student to activities & leadership opportunities
- Assist with enrollment
- Address any barriers

4.

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR THE STUDENT: ENSURE THAT THE STUDENT HAS THE HELP NEEDED TO PROGRESS ACADEMICALLY IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE SETTING

- *Aspiration: Teacher Expectations Matter*
- *Inclusion: Pull In, Don't Push Out*
- *Accommodation: Intervening Now Costs Less Later*
 - ▣ *Academic Supports*
 - ▣ *Diversified Learning*

5.

ADDRESS THE STUDENT'S BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH NEEDS

- Consider impact of trauma
- Get student supports
- Consider referring the student to the Student Assistance Program (SAP)

6.

HELP OLDER YOUTH PLAN FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Connect to resources
- Confirm IEP Transition plan

CONFIDENTIALITY CONSIDERATIONS

- FERPA protects education records
- School Records → Child Welfare
 - OK with Parent Consent or Court Order
- Child Welfare Records → School
 - ONLY with Court Order

TRUANCY



- Identifying Causes of Truancy
- Truancy Elimination Plan

TRANSITION PLANNING & HIGHER EDUCATION

- Individualized Planning for Adulthood
- IEP Transition Planning Starts at 14
- Financial Aid and Scholarships Are Available

OTHER ISSUES

- Education Decision Makers
 - ▣ Parent Makes Decisions, UNLESS...
 - ▣ Special Education Surrogate Parent

- Education Stability
 - ▣ McKinney-Vento Act
 - ▣ Fostering Connections Act

MORE RESOURCES

- Background Information and Legal Assistance
- Training Curricula
- Promising Practices and Reform Initiatives



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DECIDING WHERE TO START

**DISCUSS WITH A PARTNER
OR SMALL GROUP:**

“Six Acts A
Teacher Can
Take To Help A
Child In Care
Succeed In
School”

**DISCUSS WHICH OF THE
ACT YOU THINK WOULD:**

- Be the greatest change in your practice
- Have the greatest impact on the youth at your school

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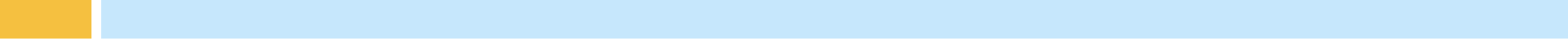
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Where to Start?



- Changes we can make
- Challenges to changes
- Impact we will have

- 
1. **Reflect** on your pedagogy and school culture
 2. **Share** this information
 3. **Talk** to the experts – YOUTH!
 4. **Build relationships** with child welfare professionals

SMALL COMMITMENT = BIG REWARD



- Make A Choice
- Make A Commitment
- Make A Difference



This training is supported by a grant from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.



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