

Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Trafficking of Children and Youth

*A Prevention and Intervention Resource Guide
for Educators, Parents and Community Members*

Introduction

In 2013, the Washington State Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5563, an act relating to training school employees in the prevention of sexual abuse.

The legislature noted that students benefit when teachers and school staff are trained in identifying and preventing child sexual abuse, commercial sexual abuse of minors, and sexual exploitation of minors.

A coalition of providers was given the task of making educational materials available throughout the state. Under the leadership of the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, this document reflects a collaborative effort involving many organizations and agencies:

- Association of Washington School Principals
- Center for Children and Youth Justice
- Committee for Children
- Department of Early Learning
- Department of Social and Health Services
- Office of Crime Victims Advocacy
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
- Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
- Washington State School Directors' Association
- YouthCare

This guide is designed to inform educators, parents and other interested community members about:

- The laws related to sex offenses, including registration, community notification and the classification of sex offenders based on an assessment of the risk of reoffending;
- Recognizing behaviors characteristic of sex offenses and sex offenders;
- Preventing victimization, particularly that of young children;
- Taking advantage of community resources for victims of sexual assault; ((and))
- Preventing children from being recruited into sex trafficking; and other information as deemed appropriate.

Contents

[Defining 'Sexual Exploitation' and 'Trafficking'](#)

[What We Know about Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Youth](#)

[The Dynamics of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking](#)

[Who's at Risk?](#)

[Warning Signs to Help Identify Pimps/Traffickers](#)

[Warning Signs to Help Identify Victims](#)

[How to Talk with Children and Youth about Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking](#)

[What to Do If You Suspect Abuse](#)

[Victim Assistance Resources](#)

[Community Prevention and Intervention](#)

[Laws Addressing Sex Abuse, Exploitation and Sex Trafficking in Washington State](#)

[Reports, Studies and Additional Resources](#)

Defining ‘Sexual Exploitation’ and ‘Trafficking’

What is sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and youth?

There are several terms that are commonly used to describe child sex trafficking and the exploitation of children and youth, such as **commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)**, **commercial sexual exploitation of youth (CSEY)**, and **domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST)**. Frequently, the terms are used interchangeably to speak to the larger issue of targeted sexual violence toward someone under the age of 18. However, there are important distinctions which particularly impact how the crimes are addressed under state and federal law.

Sexual exploitation can involve a range of crimes, including forcing or coercing a child/youth to participate in sex acts, pornography, street-based prostitution, internet-based exploitation, stripping, erotic massage, phone sex lines, interfamilial pimping, or survival sex. Some of these crimes may involve giving money or something of value to the child or another person. All of these acts take advantage of the imbalance of power between an adult and a child. This targeted exploitation, objectification, and violence is child abuse; it is illegal and has significant impacts for the victim, families, and the community at large.

Additional Resources

- [Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Fact Sheet](#)
- [Sex Trafficking in the United States](#)

What We Know about Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Youth

Is sex trafficking and sexual exploitation really a problem in Washington?

Yes, child sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation occur in Washington. Although we do not have Washington-specific data, professionals from many disciplines across the state have identified and worked with child and youth victims. Washington’s geographic location, the proximity of major ports, and the I-5 corridor have made our state an attractive place for exploiters and traffickers. Trafficking and exploitation happen in both urban and rural areas. Child victims have been recruited from small towns in eastern Washington and brought to Seattle, and gang-related prostitution is prominent in areas of central Washington.

Sexual violence is recognized as the most underreported crime in America. Statistics on sexual exploitation and trafficking are difficult to obtain due to low reporting, poor detection rates, fear, shame, and silence. We know that child victims have been identified in cities, suburbs, and rural areas in all 50 states. According to the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation:

- The U.S. Department of Justice states that the average age of entry into prostitution is 12-14 years old.

- Underage girls are the bulk of victims in the commercial sex markets, which include pornography, stripping, escort services, and prostitution.
- Sixty percent of children exploited in prostitution are first recruited by peers.
- The overwhelming majority of runaway, homeless, abused, and at-risk children are approached by pimps and drug dealers within 48 hours of landing on the streets.
- Earlier childhood sexual abuse greatly increases vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation during teen years. According to national statistics, children who are sexually abused earlier in childhood are four times more likely than their peers to be targeted and victimized by commercial sexual exploitation. Other risk factors for commercially sexually exploited children include homelessness, inadequate supervision or care by parents or family, and exposure to domestic violence in the home.
- The rise of the internet and increased use of technology have led to more children being exploited in the commercial sex trade. Pimps use the internet, text messaging, and digital and web cameras to set up “dates” for their “girls.” The girl never has to leave the van she is sitting in or the hotel room where she has been placed to be exploited, making her harder to find and harder to save.

Additional Resources

- [Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Fact Sheet](#)
- [Who Pays the Price: Assessment of Youth Involvement in Prostitution in Seattle](#)

The Dynamics of Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking

Who are the child victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking?

Any child or youth, regardless of their sex, socio-economic status, race, or nationality can be a victim of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Sexual exploitation and trafficking impact girls, boys, and transgender youth. Girls are disproportionately targeted and account for a large percentage of all trafficked youth. Underage girls also account for the majority of persons in all commercial sex markets in the United States, including pornography, stripping, escort services and prostitution. Sex crimes such as child sexual abuse, imagery production, pornography, and trafficking impact children and youth of all ages (infants, toddlers, children, and youth).

Who are the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and trafficking?

A “pimp” is a common term used for someone who controls and benefits financially from the exploitation of a child or youth. People often use the term “john” to refer to those who buy sex from someone who is being prostituted or otherwise sexually exploited. However, these terms should not distract from the reality that those who exploit children and youth for profit and sexual pleasure are diverse. They can be businessmen, trusted members of a community, a neighbor, a family member, a gang, or an intimate partner.

While unknown persons can pose a threat, most children and youth are victimized by someone known to them. In fact, perpetrators often establish or build upon an existing relationship to coerce or manipulate children and youth into sexually exploitative acts. For example, one common tactic used by pimps is to play the role of a boyfriend and then gradually begin to exploit the victim once trust and loyalty have been developed.

How do perpetrators recruit and control victims?

Unknown perpetrators may recruit children and youth online, at public events, in malls, schools, on the streets and in shelters. Recruiters may be adults or other youth. As previously mentioned, perpetrators may also use an existing relationship with a child or youth to coerce or manipulate them into sexually exploitative acts.

Perpetrators often garner the trust of their victims through a process commonly referred to as **grooming**. They may also exploit other vulnerabilities or factors in a child's or youth's life such as existing trauma, low self-esteem, isolation from family or friends, lack of basic resources, sexual orientation, homelessness, or criminal behavior. Perpetrators may use force, violence, threats, lies, false promises, or other forms of control and manipulation to keep their victims reliant on them and involved in sexually exploitative activities or other ongoing illegal activity.

Perpetrators may utilize technology to reach potential child and youth victims. They may "friend" youth on social media sites or pose as talent or modeling scouts online and coerce children into sending personal information and images online. Technology such as social media, webcams, and smart phones offers perpetrators access to children in nuanced and evolving ways. Technology also provides a host of opportunities for offenders to share images, advertise their victims, and maintain further control over their victims (i.e. tracking software and technology; threatening to "out" the victim via social media).

Age is the primary factor of vulnerability. Pre-teen or adolescent girls are more susceptible to the calculated advances, deception, and manipulation tactics used by traffickers/pimps – no youth is exempt from falling prey to these tactics. Traffickers target locations youth frequent such as schools, malls, parks, bus stops, shelters and group homes. Runaway or homeless youth as well as those with a history of physical and sexual abuse have an increased risk of being trafficked.

– Shared Hope International

A victim's relationship with the perpetrator can be complex. In fact, the perpetrator may be meeting emotional, physical and other basic needs of the victim. This, coupled with perpetrators' expertise in exploiting their victim can contribute to victims not identifying themselves as such and feeling partially responsible for their own victimization.

Additional Resources

- [**Addressing Misconceptions: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**](#)
- [**Who are the victims?**](#)
- [**Who are the traffickers?**](#)
- [**Human Trafficking and Technology: A framework for understanding the role of technology in the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S**](#)

- [Cyberbullying and Digital/Internet Safety](#)
- [NetSmartz for Parents and Guardians](#)

Who's at Risk

What can make someone more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking?

Any child or youth can be a victim of sexual exploitation and trafficking. However, we also know that perpetrators are looking for ways to exploit existing vulnerabilities of children and youth, as well as the communities they live in. The graphic below outlines possible risk factors for sexual exploitation and trafficking and shows that these risk factors occur on multiple levels.

We know that those in our society who have less power, access, and resources are often victimized and exploited at higher rates. Perpetrators take advantage of this imbalance of power and often try to identify victims with social, emotional, and basic needs that they can leverage as part of the grooming process. They rely on those around them to support or ignore their actions in order to continue their crimes.

While it is important to talk to children and youth about risk-reduction strategies, adults and communities are responsible for protecting children and youth from harm and creating environments where the sexual exploitation of young people is unacceptable. Adults must understand the risk factors and dynamics of sexual exploitation and trafficking and take action based on this knowledge to protect children and youth.

According to the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, a federal law passed in 2000, any child under the age of 18 years old who is used for the purpose of exploitation through sexual servitude (prostitution), regardless of the absence of economic leverage, manipulation, fraud, coercion, threats, force or violence is considered a commercially sexually exploited child and a victim of human trafficking.

A child victim of human trafficking does not have to prove that they were tricked or violently forced into sexual exploitation in order to be considered a victim of human trafficking under this federal law. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act applies to every child human trafficking victim in the United States, whether trafficked domestically or internationally.

—Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation
“Know the Facts: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children”

Warning Signs to Help Identify Pimps/Traffickers

What characteristics do pimps/traffickers often exhibit?

Some of the “*look-fors*” include:

- Jealous, controlling and violent behavior
- Significantly older than female companions
- Pushy or demanding about sex
- Vague about his/her profession

And/or who:

- Promises things that seem too good to be true
- Encourages victims to engage in illegal activities to achieve their goals and dreams
- Buys expensive gifts or owns expensive items
- Encourages inappropriate sexual behavior
- Makes the victim feel responsible for his/her financial stability.
- Very open about financial matters.

Source: Shared Hope International

Warning Signs to Help Identify Victims

What are indicators that a child might be being trafficked or sexually exploited?

When children and youth experience sexual violence, they may not talk about what is happening to them or they may talk about it in ways that we are not listening for. It is up to attentive adults to be engaged in young people’s lives, recognize signs, ask questions, and connect with other adults for information and support when there is cause for concern.

The indicators below are not a guarantee that sexual exploitation or trafficking has occurred; rather it is a list of “red flags” that signal the need for support and conversation. Victims of varying ages may exhibit a variety of physical and behavioral signs. The presence of these signs may be significant; it may also suggest problems other than sexual abuse, exploitation, or trafficking. Adults should be alert to “red flags” such as:

- Extreme changes in behavior, such as loss of appetite
- Fear of the dark or sleep disturbances—nightmares, bed-wetting, fear of sleeping alone, or loss of sleep
- Regression to more infantile behavior such as thumb-sucking or excessive crying
- Expressing affection in ways inappropriate for a child of their age
- Unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters, or excessive masturbation

- Vaginal or rectal bleeding, pain, itching, swollen genitals, vaginal discharge, or sexually transmitted diseases
- Physical marks such as bruises, bites, or cut marks
- Fear or intense dislike of a particular person or being left in a particular place
- Change in school patterns; specifically, reduced attendance, inability to concentrate, excessive daydreaming, sudden changes in grades
- Pregnancy
- Suicide attempts
- Alcohol or drug use
- Having unaffordable new things such as clothes, money, or technological devices
- Sexualized activity or conversations not developmentally appropriate for the child's/youth's age
- Having a significantly older "boyfriend or girlfriend"
- Getting excessive phone messages or calls
- Scripted communication
- Has hotel keys
- Possesses fake identification
- Tells life stories with inconsistencies
- Has markings/ brandings (identifying tattoo)
- Has minimal knowledge of their community or location
- Lacks access to a parent or guardian
- Does not have control over their schedule or schedule is regularly changing
- Entering or leaving cars or taxis with unknown persons
- Other behavioral signals, such as aggressive or disruptive behavior, withdrawal, running away, or delinquent behavior

If you suspect a child or youth has been abused because you see these indicators, or if they hint at abuse or outright disclose sexual exploitation or trafficking, seek support.

How to Talk with Children and Youth about Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking

What is my role as an educator?

As a teacher or other professional in the school setting, you are a trusted adult that a child or youth might come to about things that are happening in their life or the lives of their friends. Your interactions with students can model healthy boundaries and relationships and can reinforce their rights and value as young people. You can make a positive impact by being a nonjudgmental listener, offering support, and providing information and resources that are relevant to their lives.

The rapport you build with children and youth will help them to know that you are a safe person to talk to if they are experiencing sexual exploitation or trafficking. If this happens, remember the tips above,

follow your school's reporting procedures, and work with other staff and outside professionals to get them the support and services they need.

As a parent, how do I talk to my children about sexual exploitation and trafficking?

It's important to have an open, ongoing, and honest dialog with the children in your life about these issues. These are not one-time conversations, and you don't have to talk about everything all at once.

As an adult it is your job to keep children safe. However, children also need information about the realities of abuse and exploitation so they are aware of their personal safety and know what to do if something doesn't feel right. Talking to the children in your life about personal safety, sexual exploitation, and trafficking communicates to them that you care, are a resource for questions, and are a safe person to come to if something happens.

Just as they need information about what situations or actions may be harmful or abusive, they also need information about what is healthy when it comes to personal boundaries, consent, relationships, and sexuality. Help your child to identify feelings, aspects of healthy relationships, and indicators that someone may be manipulating or ignoring their boundaries and wishes. Use examples that they can relate to and are age appropriate. Throughout your conversations, always remind them that if someone does harm them, it is never their fault and you will believe them.

If a child/youth discloses sexual abuse, exploitation, or trafficking:

- Believe them
- Acknowledge their bravery in talking to you
- Let them know they are not at fault
- Remain focused and stay calm
- Don't pressure them for information--let them use their own words to tell you what they are comfortable sharing at that time
- Offer reassurance that you will be a consistent support for them
- Remember safety. If you are concerned for the immediate safety of the child/youth or yourself, contact law enforcement
- Locate support and file an appropriate report (See: *Resources* and *What to Do If You Suspect Abuse.*)

Additional Resources

- [Start the Conversation: A Booklet for Adults \(English\)](#)
- [Start the Conversation: A Booklet for Adults \(Spanish\)](#)
- [100 Conversations—An online resource to help you have conversations with young people about sex, relationships, values, and safety](#)
- [Engaging High-School Age Sons to Stop Sexual Harm](#)
- [Cyberbullying and Digital/Internet Safety](#)

What to Do If You Suspect Abuse

What is my role as an educator?

Professional school personnel in Washington State are mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Follow your school's policy for ensuring that a report is made. Contact your school administration, nurse and/or counselor. If you have immediate safety concerns for the child or yourself, contact law enforcement.

Children and youth who are sexually exploited or trafficked may not identify as a victim of crime or seek support for a multitude of reasons. They may be scared, fear reprisal, lack trust in adults, fear they will be blamed, blame themselves, or worry about the impact to the perpetrator. Previous experiences or influence from their perpetrator may lead them to fear systems and distrust authorities.

Children and youth may also have concerns about their involvement in criminal behavior and fear legal recourse. Washington State law is designed to protect sexually exploited youth and support services are available.

How do I make a report?

To make a report of abuse, you do not need to have proof that sexual exploitation or trafficking occurred. It is the job of authorities to investigate these reports and take appropriate action. Some professionals are [required by state law](#) to report suspected child abuse and neglect to law enforcement or child protective services. However, any concerned community member can make a report.

One can make a report by calling the statewide reporting hotline at 1-866-ENDHARM or contacting local law enforcement.

Reporting Specific to the Prostitution of Children:

- To report an incident or suspicious situation that may involve the prostitution of children, contact the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) at 1-888-373-7888
- You can file a confidential online report at <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/national-human-trafficking-hotline/report-a-tip>. Your report will be forwarded to a law enforcement agency for investigation and action.
- To report an incident involving the sexual exploitation of children, file a report on the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)'s website at www.cybertipline.com, or call 1-800-843-5678. The report will be forwarded to a law enforcement agency for investigation and action.

Additional Resources

- [How to Report Child Abuse or Neglect in Washington State](#)

Victim Assistance Resources

What is my role as an educator?

School personnel should follow their school's policy for responding to disclosures of abuse. Contact your school administration, nurse and/or counselor. Beyond making a report, it is important that someone be familiar with and connect victims to the resources and service providers in your community so their ongoing needs can be met.

Where can I find victim assistance?

A list of these community sexual assault programs can be found on the [Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs' website](#).

There are advocacy organizations in each county that are designed to help children and youth who have experienced sexual violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking. Each of these programs has a 24/7 hotline for victims and community members. Advocates at these programs provide free and confidential support services; however, they are also subject to mandatory reporting laws.

Sexually exploited and trafficked children and youth are victims, not criminals. They may be fearful of reporting and be unsure what to expect upon disclosing abuse. They may need a broad range of services in order to heal from the abuse they experienced and have a healthy, safe future. These may include:

- Emergency, transitional, or long-term housing
- Crisis intervention and ongoing advocacy
- Legal advocacy and/or representation
- Medical care
- Mental health services
- Clothing and food
- Employment assistance
- Educational access
- Safety planning
- Assistance securing legal documents such as a birth certificate, social security card, or driver's license
- Assistance in accessing government benefits
- Immigration relief

If you think you have come in contact with an exploited youth or victim of human trafficking, and need further support and information call:

- [Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network](#): 206-245-0782
- Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force: 888-428-7581
- [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#): 888-373-7888

- In Washington: 866-ENDHARM or your local law enforcement agency

Additional Resources:

- [Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs](#)
- [Resources and Benefits for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children](#)
- [Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children](#)

Community Prevention and Intervention

How can our community address sexual exploitation and trafficking?

Exploited and trafficked children and youth deserve the opportunity to access support and heal. It is important that they are believed and empowered to make decisions for their well-being. Victims' behaviors should not be judged or criminalized; rather, we should focus on why the sexual exploitation of children and youth is allowed in our communities and how we can hold offenders accountable.

There are many conditions that allow sexual violence to exist. Primary to sex trafficking and exploitation is the reality that there is a market for images and sex with minors. We must send the message that the objectification and sexual exploitation of children and youth is unacceptable.

- Raise awareness of sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Understand the risk factors and work with others to address them at the societal, community, relationship, and individual levels
- Know the dynamics and red flags of sexual exploitation and trafficking and educate others
- Engage and support young people in your community; take action when their rights and well-being are not being respected
- Teach the children in your life about healthy relationships, healthy sexuality and consent
- Be prepared to support victims and connect them with resources and services

Additional Resources

- [Addressing the Demand](#)
- [Preventing Sexual Violence](#)

Laws Addressing Sex Abuse, Exploitation and Sex Trafficking in Washington State

7.68.360	Human trafficking—Coordinated state agency protocols
9A.40.100	Trafficking
9A.44.073	Rape of a child in the first degree
9A.44.076	Rape of a child in the second degree
9A.44.079	Rape of a child in the third degree
9A.44.083	Child molestation in the first degree
9A.44.086	Child molestation in the second degree
9A.44.089	Child molestation in the third degree
9A.44.093	Sexual misconduct with a minor in the first degree
9A.44.096	Sexual misconduct with a minor in the second degree
9A.44.115	Voyeurism
9A.44.120	Admissibility of child’s statement – Conditions
9A.44.150	Testimony of child by closed-circuit television
9A.44.190	Criminal trespass against children – Definitions
9A.44.193	Criminal trespass against children – Covered entities
9A.44.196	Criminal trespass against children
9A.82.100	Civil Remedy
9A.88.0001	Asset Forfeiture
9.68A	Sexual Exploitation of Children
9.68A.100	Commercial Sexual Abuse of a Minor
9.68A.101	Promoting Sexual Abuse of a Minor
9.73.230	Interception of Communications
9.96.060	Vacating Convictions
13.32A.030	Safe Harbor Provisions
13.40.219	Arrest for prostitution or prostitution loitering—Alleged offender—Victim of severe form of trafficking, commercial sex abuse of a minor
19.320.010	Definitions
19.320.020	Disclosure statement
19.320.030	Personal jurisdiction
19.320.040	Liability
19.320.050	Assistance information
47.38.080	Human trafficking informational posters at rest areas
SB 6476	Training for Law Enforcement

Reports, Studies and Additional Resources

[CAASE: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation](#)

CAASE envisions a community free from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual assault and the commercial sex trade. CAASE addresses prevention, policy reform, community engagement, and legal services.

[Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children](#)

Developed by the Center for Children and Youth Justice, in partnership with YouthCare, the model protocol reflects emerging best practices and includes key components of a coordinated response.

[FBI—Violent Crimes Against Children](#)

The FBI, Department of Justice Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children provide resources through the Innocence Lost National Initiative. This combined effort aims at addressing the growing problem of domestic sex trafficking of children in the United States.

[Human Trafficking and Technology: A Framework for Understanding the Role of Technology](#)

A draft framework that outlines key facets of human trafficking and the role that technologies such as the Internet, mobile phones, and social media play in human trafficking.

[Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors](#)

The Institute of Medicine concludes that efforts to prevent, identify, and respond to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors in the United States require better collaborative approaches that build upon the capabilities of people and entities from a range of sectors.

[Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children \(Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention\)](#)

OJJDP provides strategies for a comprehensive assessment of the dangers facing children from child pornography, online enticement, child sex tourism, commercial sexual exploitation, and sexual exploitation.

[Polaris Project: For a World Without Slavery](#)

Polaris Project is a leading organization in the global fight against human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

[Safe Place: For Youth...Someplace to Go. Someone to Help](#)

The National Safe Place outreach program provides access to immediate help and safety for all youth in crisis. Locally, Safe Place is a community initiative that designates schools, fire stations, libraries and youth-friendly businesses as Safe Place sites where youth can access help and supportive resources.

[Safe Place : King County](#)

Within King County, Safe Place provides quick access to safety and resources for homeless and runaway youth in King County. Teens ages 12-17 can call 800-422-TEEN for immediate help

[Tronie Foundation: A Global Organization to End Slavery and Human Trafficking](#)

The Tronie Foundation is a survivor-led global organization that has advised more than 150 countries on the solutions to protecting children around the world.

OSPI provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Equity and Civil Rights Director at (360) 725-6162 or P.O. Box 47200 Olympia, WA 98504-7200.



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