

# MTSU Center for Health and Human Services Newsletter



*Better Health and Well-Being  
for Tennesseans and That of the Nation*



## COURAGE

**"I LEARNED THAT COURAGE WAS NOT THE ABSENCE OF FEAR, BUT THE TRIUMPH OVER IT."**

– Nelson Mandela

CHHS has had an exciting and busy fall, and it is expected that we will remain busy into the winter months ahead as well. Why is "courage" the focus word this quarter? Those who have been reading earlier editions of the newsletter, following us on social media, or interacting with us in person in some capacity know that the center is growing again. With that growth comes a lot of uncharted territory and taking a few leaps of faith that require great courage. The CHHS team is excited about what is yet to come and looks forward to sharing our journey with the campus community.

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**FALL/WINTER OVERVIEW** *continued from page*

Since the last quarterly newsletter, CHHS has:



Cynthia Chafin, M.Ed.,  
MCHES® CHHS director

- Received a formal notice of award from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), for the center’s largest grant in its 30-year history, totaling **\$2,921,726** and

which will support the expansion of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for those impacted by substance use disorder in a six rural Tennessee county service area. This project launched on Sept. 30, 2023, and will go through Sept. 29, 2025. Read more about this project in the Summer 2023 newsletter with more to come in the Spring 2024 newsletter and on the center’s website.



Office of Prevention  
Science and Recovery

- Formed a new [MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery \(OPSR\)](#) which seeks to engage local stakeholders to maximize local opioid settlement resources in

Rutherford County, ensuring opioid abatement dollars are disseminated in a meaningful way and that organizations receiving funding demonstrate impact and responsible stewardship. The OPSR will also serve as a resource to other counties who are seeking opioid abatement funding. The office was officially launched on July 1 as part of a formal agreement with the Rutherford County government, which provided funding to support this new endeavor. Read more about this initiative in this newsletter as the featured project.

- Created and filled two new full-time positions—a dedicated CHHS evaluator and technical writer and a senior project director for the

newly established Office of Prevention Science and Recovery.

- Approved an office renovation plan that provides office space for up to five new staff members as part of the center’s continuing growth.

The center continues to seek funding and opportunities that support the health and well-being of Tennesseans and that of the nation, courageously exploring opportunities that may be out of the comfort zone, but that are promising and have the potential to impact many. A shoutout is in order to all on and off campus who support the center’s work as well as the growing CHHS team’s desire to positively impact health locally and at a state and national level and to do it boldly and with great courage. The support of the University’s administration, which has seen value in the center’s work and helped remove barriers along the way to allow us to do what we do, is immensely appreciated.

CHHS continues to identify collaborators and partners both on and off campus to be involved in CHHS projects, programs, and research.

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**FALL/WINTER OVERVIEW** *continued from page*

To learn more about the center and its work to promote better health and well-being for all through its existing projects, programs, and research with local, state, and national reach, take a look at our [website](#), read more throughout this newsletter and previous editions posted on the website's [publications tab](#), and follow us on social media.

**Current Research, Projects, and Programs:**

- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Expansion
- Rutherford County Opioid Board – MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery
- Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students 2.0
- Infant Death Scene Investigation/Safe Sleep
- MTSU Mental Health First Aid
- Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Implementation

- Safe Stars Evaluation
- Alcohol and Drug Prevention Social Norms

With our current and recent portfolio of research, projects, and programs that focus on substance use disorders, obesity and diabetes prevention, mental health, injury prevention, and workforce development, we again express gratitude to our many partners who make our work possible as we make a difference in the lives of Tennesseans and others throughout the nation. CHHS looks forward to continuing to serve the public in these important areas as well as our campus community through our campus-focused grants.

For those who are not familiar with CHHS, please take an opportunity to visit the [center's website](#) to read more about our work. Previous editions of the CHHS newsletter are available and include featured research, projects, and programs, with additional information posted on the website.

## Want to donate to further the work of MTSU's CHHS?

**MTSU CHHS operates primarily through external funding.** To continue our mission of promoting health and well-being for all Tennesseans and that of our nation, we need financial resources to continue our work. We operate from public and private grants as well as sponsorships and donations.

**Please consider a donation of any size, which will go directly to CHHS.**

Visit [mtsu.edu/chhs](https://mtsu.edu/chhs), click on Donate Now, and specify that your donation is for CHHS. The site accepts MasterCard, VISA, and American Express.

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Office of Prevention  
Science and Recovery

## Project Spotlight and CHHS Campus and Community Collaborations: MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery

In 2021, Rutherford County experienced 141 fatal overdoses, a 48% increase from 2019. To respond to this need, Rutherford County established the Rutherford Opioid Board in 2022 to oversee strategic dissemination of opioid abatement funds to repair and strengthen the community. With Rutherford County expecting to receive nearly \$4.5 million in opioid abatement dollars from 2023–26, the Rutherford Opioid Board established the [MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery \(OPSR\)](#) to assist the county in evidence-based utilization of settlement dollars and to serve as a resource to other Tennessee counties. The new office leverages the large-scale grant management expertise and experience of the MTSU Center for Health and Human Services and the solution-focused data analytics experience of the [MTSU Data Science Institute](#).

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### Rutherford County Opioid Abatement Funds—Grant Writing Workshops

In September, the Office of Prevention Science and Recovery hosted its first two grant writing workshops for community members to learn more regarding applying for Rutherford County opioid settlement funding. The two workshops had nearly 40 attendees representing over 25 different organizations serving Rutherford County. Attendees demonstrated a substantial increase in knowledge pertaining to the opioid settlement application requirements and an increase in confidence regarding writing a grant application for funding on behalf of their organizations, as measured by pre- and post-workshop surveys. The Office of Prevention Science and Recovery will host these workshops each quarter in alignment with the quarterly grant application deadlines throughout the year.

To learn more about the [MTSU CHHS Office of Prevention Science and Recovery](#), to view the recorded grant writing workshop, or to learn more about the grant application process for Rutherford County opioid abatement funds, visit [Office of Prevention Science and Recovery Middle Tennessee State University \(mtsu.edu/chhs/opsr/index.php\)](#)

**PROJECT SPOTLIGHT** *continued from page 4*

The mission of the Office of Prevention Science and Recovery is to facilitate data-driven, evidence-based projects in the areas of opioid and substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery that restore hope and build resilience throughout Tennessee. The inaugural project for OPSR is focused on creating a grant application and review process for Rutherford County to disseminate opioid abatement funds directly into the community.

In addition to creating an application and review process, the office has been monitoring activities of current grant recipients to collect data and report on what activities are most effective for reducing overdoses in Rutherford County. In the future, the Office of Prevention Science and Recovery will be working to replicate models such as this in neighboring counties interested in disseminating local abatement funds to community organizations.

## The Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council

In May 2021, the Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council was created by the Tennessee General Assembly to manage the disbursement of proceeds from lawsuits relating to opioids. The council upholds the responsibility to ensure these funds go toward programs, strategies, expenditures, and other actions designed to prevent and address the misuse of opioid products. The 15 members of the council were appointed by government officials such as the governor, lieutenant governor, and House speaker.

In March 2022, Tennessee, along with other states, reached a \$26 billion settlement with four companies to resolve legal claims for their roles in the opioid crisis, with Tennessee receiving \$700 million in anticipated payouts over 18 years, from 2021–38. Beginning in February 2023, the Tennessee Opioid Abatement Council distributed payouts from this settlement to counties across Tennessee. Each county has the power to control allocation of its portion of the settlement funding, but it must be used within the allowable uses outlined in a 16-

page list provided from the settlement. Counties have until February 2025 to allocate their first deposit of funds and until February 2027 to spend their first deposit of funds. Every county receives a unique settlement payout amount each year that is calculated based upon a county's population and overdose rates, along with the total amount of company settlement payouts the state has received. Every county will receive an annual settlement payment during the first quarter of each year through 2038; however, that amount will fluctuate annually as population counts, overdose rates, and the total number of opioid settlements reached will change.





# MTSU BLUE RAIDERS DRINK UP

## Water Refill Stations Map

\*Funded by Blue Raiders Up



<b>AMG</b>	Alumni Memorial Gym 1-First Floor, 3-Second Floor*	<b>LIB</b>	James E. Walker Library 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor
<b>BAS</b>	Business and Aerospace Building 1-First Floor, 2-Second Floor*, 2-Third Floor*, 1-Fourth Floor*	<b>LRC</b>	Ned McWhorter Learning Resources Center 1-First Floor*
<b>BDA</b>	Boutwell Dramatic Arts Building 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor	<b>MC</b>	Murphy Center 4-First Floor*
<b>BRAGG</b>	John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building 1-Second Floor	<b>MOH</b>	Monohan Hall 1-First Floor*
<b>CAB</b>	Cope Administration Building 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor	<b>PH</b>	Peck Hall 1-Second Floor
<b>CKNB</b>	Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building 2-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor*	<b>REC</b>	Health, Wellness, and Recreation Center 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor
<b>COE</b>	College of Education Building 1-First Floor	<b>SAG</b>	Stark Agriculture Center 1-First Floor
<b>COR</b>	Corlew Hall 1-First Floor*	<b>SCI</b>	Science Building 1-First Floor
<b>DSB</b>	Davis Science Building 2-First Floor	<b>SFA</b>	Saunders Fine Arts Building 1-Second Floor, 1-Third Floor*
<b>EHS</b>	Ellington Human Sciences Building 1-First Floor	<b>SSAC</b>	Student Services and Admissions Center 1-First Floor, 1-Second Floor
<b>FAIR</b>	Fairview Building 1-First Floor	<b>STU</b>	Student Union Building 1-Second Floor
<b>HONR</b>	Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building 1-Second Floor	<b>TODD</b>	Andrew L. Todd Hall 1-First Floor*, 1-Second Floor
<b>ING</b>	Sam H. Ingram Building 1-Garage Level, 1-First Floor	<b>VET</b>	Voorhies Engineering Technology 1-First Floor
<b>JCH</b>	Jim Cummings Hall 1-First Floor*	<b>WMB</b>	Wright Music Building 1-First Floor, 2-Second Floor*
<b>JH</b>	Jones Hall 1-First Floor, 1-Third Floor*	<b>WPS</b>	Wiser-Patten Science Hall 1-First Floor
<b>KOM</b>	Kirksey Old Main 1-First Floor		
<b>KUC</b>	Keathley University Center 1-Second Floor		



Building with water refill stations. See legend to the right for names of buildings and exact locations of refill stations.

This program is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee.

I AM true BLUE.

Middle Tennessee State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, status as a protected veteran, or any other category protected by law. See our full policy at mtsu.edu/ncc.

Follow us on our social media,  
@mtsu\_chhs on Instagram and  
@mtsu.chhs on Facebook for events.

## Whom Do We Serve?

The Center for Health and Human Services collaborates with MTSU faculty and staff, and public and private organizations and partners, to develop and implement local, regional, and statewide programs, projects, and research activities designed to improve the health and well-being of Tennesseans and of the nation. Did you know that much of our work involves off-campus initiatives? One of the more

common misconceptions about CHHS is that we solely serve the campus community. While some of our efforts do focus on our campus, the majority of our work is done in communities across Tennessee, some of which serve as models for other states. Our projects have touched all 95 Tennessee counties, with some involving multistate partnerships and others having national impact.



Ash Abro and Rose Chilsen, MTSU Dietetics graduates and former CHHS staff.

## CHHS Campus Resources



### MTSU Mental Health First Aid

CHHS is offering MHFA training **FREE** to the campus community as part of a recently awarded grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Visit our [MTSU Mental Health First Aid website](#) to learn more.

More than 225 campus community members have been trained in Mental Health First Aid so far in 2023, and we look forward to serving many more! In 2018–21, more than 1,100 were trained through MHFA. We will continue to serve the campus community in the 2023–26 calendar years with this evidence-based national program.

CHHS is currently unable to offer an MHFA self-pay option to those not affiliated with our campus or another university. Community partners and outside organizations can find trainings available in their area (or virtual options) at the Mental Health First Aid website. For non-university partners wishing to have a training session just for their group, it may be worthwhile to use that tool and reach out to trainers in your area. [mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/](https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/find-a-course/)

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# Wilson County RCORP Grant Update

The **CHHS Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP)** Implementation Grant funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration is now well into its third and final year. As part of the three-year workplan, MTSU CHHS partners with the Wilson County PIC Center (also known as a diversion center), which seeks to divert individuals from incarceration and into treatment. There are currently **42 people active in the program, 48 graduates of the program, and the program has a 70% success rate.** There are **15 individuals expected to graduate** in the next two months. RCORP transportation funds are being used to give rides to and from treatment appointments in the rural areas of Wilson County, where it can be difficult getting to a treatment facility. During the summer, the MTSU RCORP team built upon the [2023 RCORP Wilson County Provider and Community Stigma Report](#) by



completing additional surveys measuring stigma surrounding substance use at the Tennessee State Wilson County Fair in Lebanon August 17–26. There were **435 individuals completing a survey, which was a 19.7% response rate.**

The surveys were administered a second year following a six-month billboard campaign that was implemented throughout the county. A shoutout to Dr. Kahler Stone and Health and Human Performance students for coordinating this year's data collection efforts and for an upcoming update to the 2023 RCORP Wilson County Provider Stigma Report where results of this survey will be reported. A third and final data collection will take place in summer 2024.

## Safe Stars

Safe Stars is a collaboration between the [Tennessee Department of Health \(TDH\)](#) and the Program for Injury Prevention in Youth Sports at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. Safe Stars' goal is to provide resources and opportunities for every youth sports league to enhance their safety standards. The criteria for achieving recognition as a Safe Stars league has been developed by a committee of health professionals dedicated to reducing sports-related injuries among youth.

Beginning February 15, 2023, MTSU Center for Health and Human Services has contracted with the TDH to evaluate the Safe Stars program. By the end of the project, CHHS will provide the state's Safe Stars team with expert recommendations based on survey findings, to facilitate improvements in

reducing barriers to sports leagues' submitting applications to the program as well as recommendations on program feasibility.

In the first six months of the program, CHHS developed and successfully disseminated two IRB Institutional Review Board-approved surveys as a collaborative effort between the MTSU Safe Stars team and the TDH. A survey for Safe Stars participating organizations was developed to measure barriers and facilitators to achieving Safe Stars designation, with a second survey targeting non-Safe Stars organizations to assess familiarity with Safe Stars, barriers from leagues/schools from applying, commonalities among organizations that are not designated, and how the TDH can help.

**PROJECT UPDATES** *continued from page 9*

## Blue Raiders Drink Up

**Blue Raiders Drink Up** continues to be well received by the MTSU student body in its fifth year of implementation, thanks to continued funding by the Tennessee Department of Health. Since Blue Raiders Drink Up 2.0 began July 1, 2022, the program has **educated over 2,692 MTSU students** through multiple on-campus tabling events, one-on-one health coaching and dietetic counseling, hands-on cooking classes, and healthy choices events in select dormitories across campus.

Registration closed recently for the last cooking class of the fall semester. As a part of this class, students learn how to cook healthy food on a budget and participate in a grocery store tour led by a registered dietitian. In addition, participants receive an assortment of kitchen utensils and lots of swag items, like insulated grocery bags, water bottles, T-shirts, and bento boxes. Participants also will receive a \$100 gift card for attending at least three out of the four classes. There are 20 spots per class, and they do fill up quickly, so

students are encouraged to register early when registration opens again in the spring. Future dates will be announced on the CHHS website and on social media.

Fourteen students have successfully completed the free MTSU MyFit program as part of its partnership with the Blue Raiders Drink Up program, and another four students are currently in the process of completing the program. For those unfamiliar with the program, MyFit is an individualized program that helps students work toward overall wellness by setting goals relating to their current health and wellness, fitness, nutrition, and lifestyle. The Blue Raiders Drink Up program has partnered with Campus Rec to cover the costs of this program for participating students. MTSU students who would like more information should contact Christina Byrd at [christina.byrd@mtsu.edu](mailto:christina.byrd@mtsu.edu) or see the flyer on page 12.

Project outcomes will be shared in future newsletter updates.



# Free Cooking Classes!

Join us for a 4-week cooking class series hosted by Blue Raiders Drink Up! Learn to cook healthy food on a budget and participate in a grocery store tour guided by a registered dietitian.

**Stay tuned!**

**Spring 2024 dates will be announced early next semester.**

**To stay up to date with the latest news and information by following us on our social media**



@mtsu\_chhs



@mtsu.chhs



Each participant that attends 3 out of 4 classes will receive a BRDU T-shirt, lots of kitchen utensils, giveaways, and a **\$100 Kroger gift card.**

# MyFit Training Program



## What is the MyFit program?

- ◆ This is an individualized program offered by MTSU Rec that helps you work toward overall wellness.
- ◆ It consists of 3 sessions with the option to renew for free after first sessions are completed
- ◆ During this program you will work with certified fitness specialists to identify and set goals related to your health, fitness, nutrition, and lifestyle.

## Session overview

- 1** Identifying your goals, overview of resources and equipment.
- 2** Walk-through of 4-week fitness program.
- 3** Guidance to help you continually work toward health and wellness.

**FREE  
FOR  
STUDENTS!**

**SIGN UP HERE!**



# CHHS Staff Spotlight

## Chipper Smith

This quarter CHHS is pleased to shine the spotlight on Chipper Smith. Our interview with him is below.



Office of Prevention  
Science and Recovery

**CHHS: How long have you been with CHHS and what is your role?**

**CS:** My time at CHHS started in the fall of 2020

as a student assistant on the RCORP project in Wilson County, and now I will be approaching three years at CHHS as I step into my new role with the Office of Prevention Science and Recovery! In August, I accepted the senior project coordinator position to work alongside the Rutherford Opioid Board in creating a community grant application for local nonprofits to apply for opioid abatement funding. In this new role, the Opioid Board established the MTSU Office of Prevention Science and Recovery to be a resource to neighboring counties on evidence-based strategies for disseminating opioid abatement funds.

**CHHS: How has your career grown since starting with CHHS?**

**CS:** When I started working at CHHS, I was in my first year of graduate school at MTSU and stepped into the opioid and substance use disorder (OUD/SUD) workforce for the first time. Coming into that role in 2020, my knowledge on OUD/SUD was limited to a book I read during undergrad telling the narrative of manipulative opioid marketing in the early 2000s and the misguided perception of opioids as non-addictive. Throughout my role for the RCORP Wilson County project, I learned a substantial amount of information regarding



*Chipper Smith (center) with two MTSU alumni at a Blue Raiders football game.*

measuring community stigma, the local impact of reduced recidivism, and the power of community collaboration. Now I can take that experience and utilize it for my new role in Rutherford County!

**CHHS: If you could learn to do one thing, what would that be?**

**CS:** I have always had a dream of being able to sing super well and be able to perform, so that is easily my choice of learning something new. As someone who enjoys being the center of attention from time to time, being able to sing super well would definitely fuel that desire.

**CHHS: What do you do in your free time? Hobbies?**

**CS:** I rarely spend any of my unallotted time

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**CHHS STAFF SPOTLIGHT** *continued from page 14*

during the day at home, so I can usually be found getting into something social while the sun is still up. During the week my hobbies usually always include going to the gym, playing in a volleyball rec league, and volunteering at church. On the weekends I am always finding ways to take weekend trips to see friends in surrounding areas and visit with them.

**CHHS: What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?**

**CS:** In my previous role at the Tennessee Department of Education, it was evident from the

beginning that to make an impact it would be necessary to have an elevator pitch always ready to advocate for health as a priority in schools. The founder of Coordinated School Health in Tennessee, Connie Givens, often encouraged school health leaders around the state to advocate in their school districts with “gentle pressure applied relentlessly.” That quote has always stuck with me, as achievements in public health are not reached through one big action or a single effort. Rather, progress is made through prolonged effort that continually reminds people about the health needs of others and why that need is important.



## CHHS Staff News

### Chipper Smith joins CHHS as senior project coordinator for new Office of Prevention Science and Recovery



Chipper Smith has joined CHHS as a senior project coordinator for the newly established Office of Prevention Science and Recovery. Smith has worked with CHHS since fall 2020 as a project assistant on the Rural Communities Opioid

Response Program and continues in that role. He says, "The new role in [the Office of Prevention Science and Recovery] caught my attention because it was an opportunity to impact my local community and work alongside community partners, while still applying my public health grant management experience. The thing that I look forward to most in this role is getting out into the community at local events and being a face to connect nonprofit organizations with financial resources from Rutherford County to expand their programs." CHHS is so pleased to have Smith in this important new role and appreciates the passion and expertise he brings.

### Michelle Sterlingshires selected for new CHHS evaluator and technical writer position

Michelle Sterlingshires has been with CHHS since 2020 in various capacities and has recently been promoted to the newly created position of evaluator and technical writer. Sterlingshires most recently was CHHS' post-award program

coordinator, and prior to that she worked in several capacities with the center. She says, "With my new role, I'm honored to be allowed to contribute in a different way to the wonderful work that the Center for Health and Human Services does. I will be able to be involved from the get-go on some things, and I look forward to the challenge! My degree in quantitative psychology is a great fit for grant evaluation, especially in a landscape where data-informed, evidence-based programs are essential. I hope I can leverage my education and data analyst experience to support the center's work further." CHHS is pleased to have its own internal evaluator and technical writer and welcomes Sterlingshires to her new role.



### Christina Byrd fills role as co-director for RCORP Medication-Assisted Treatment grant



Christina Byrd has been with CHHS since 2017 and serves as program coordinator on multiple projects and grants. In addition to serving as program coordinator for the Blue Raiders Drink Up: Healthy Choices for Healthy Students

**CHHS STAFF NEWS** *continued from page 15*

and the Prevention through Understanding: Infant Death Investigation projects, Byrd is serving as co-director on the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP) Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) Access grant recently awarded to CHHS by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

Byrd says, "I've had the privilege of being with CHHS for over six and a half years, working on a wide variety of grant programs as a project assistant or program coordinator. Moving into

a new venture as the co-project director on the MAT grant, I am ready and excited for this new opportunity. Knowing about the rampant opioid crisis that exists in Tennessee, I am honored to work with such an incredible team to provide meaningful impact on the lives in our communities."

CHHS is excited to welcome Byrd to her first co-director role and to this project, which will reach populations in six rural Tennessee counties.





# CHHS Staff and Faculty Partners

The CHHS reports to David L. Butler, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Research at Middle Tennessee State University.

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***"You will never do anything in this world  
without courage. It is the greatest  
quality of the mind next to honor."***

**Aristotle**

## Blue Horseshoe

A symbol of tradition  
and good fortune for  
Middle Tennessee State University.

THOSE WHO TOUCH THE BLUE HORSESHOE  
WILL BE GRANTED GOOD LUCK.

Idea created by the MTSU Student Ambassadors.  
Guidance, installation and support provided by  
MTSU Concrete Industry Management  
and the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration.

Dedicated October 23, 2005

**MIDDLE  
TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY.

I AM *true* **BLUE**.

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