

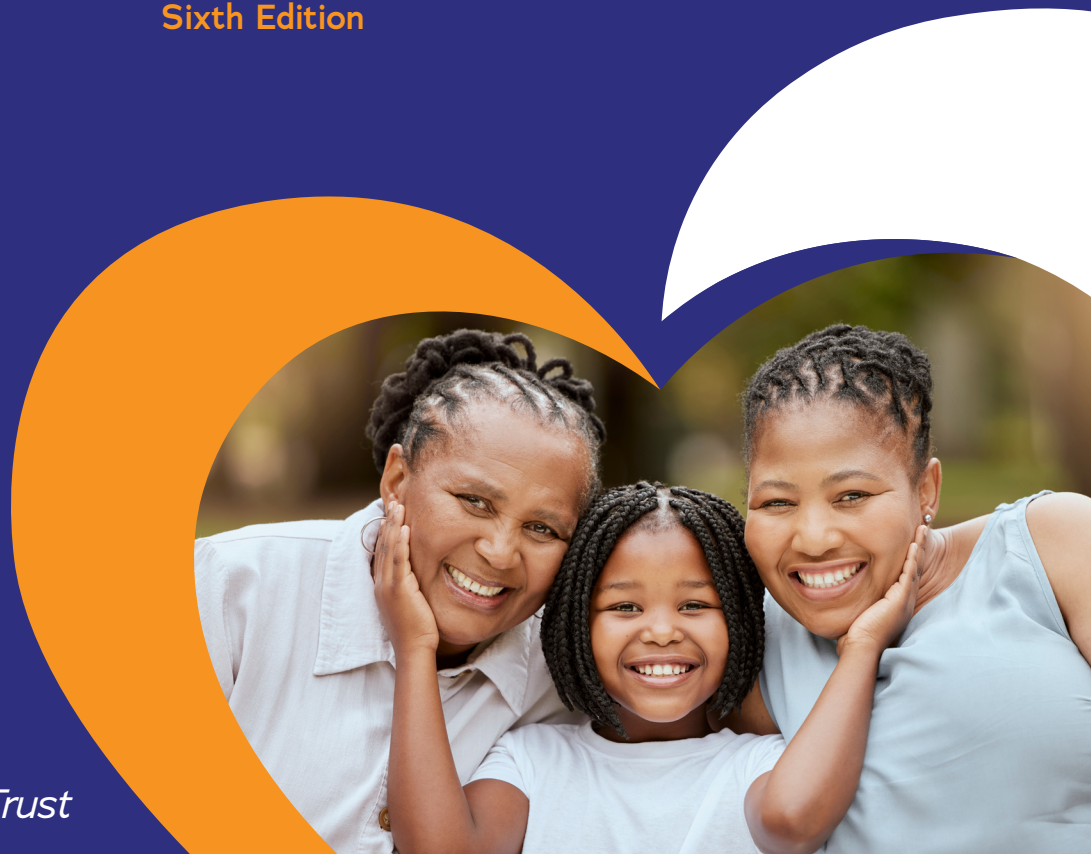


# KINSHIP NAVIGATION PROGRAM

2023

Kinship Caregiver Guide

Sixth Edition



*A program of  
New Hampshire Children's Trust*



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

**CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU**  
Governor

Dear New Hampshire Parents and Caregivers,

As a father of three, I can attest to the incredible joys of parenting as well as its many challenges. Navigating everyday stresses as a family can be difficult, yet when I look across the Granite State, I see children thriving and growing into healthy and resilient adolescents who are the future of our state.

Thank you for your patience, diligence, and incredible resilience during these unprecedented times.

I also want to thank the thousands of New Hampshire grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives stepping up to care for children whose own parents cannot. Welcoming a child into your home is joyful, but it can be stressful and financially burdensome. Navigating legal, school, and healthcare systems is trying even on the best of days, but these important efforts minimize trauma and improve a child's overall well-being.

To meet the unique challenges of kinship care, we have brought together family support agencies and organizations from across New Hampshire to create a relative caregiver support network called the Kinship Navigation Program. Rooted within NH's Family Resource Centers, the Kinship Navigation Program connects grandparents and other relative caregivers to the services and supports that promote independence and enhance family well-being.

In the *Kinship & Relative Caregiver Guide* that follows, you will learn of this network and the many free, voluntary, and completely confidential resources available throughout the Granite State.

It is because of the hard work of New Hampshire's parent leaders, community stakeholders, and family support agencies, there is a Kinship Navigator at the ready in your community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris T. Sununu".

Christopher T. Sununu  
Governor

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# Am I a Kinship Caregiver?

**Kinship caregivers** are grandparents, aunts, uncles or other relatives, or even close family friends such as godparents, who are raising children that are not their own.

Kinship caregiving happens when a child's parents are unable to meet their family's needs. Relatives or close family friends are an important resource because kinship care helps children maintain connection to family members, and in some cases even schools and communities, and increases child well-being until the situation at home improves.

Kinship care arrangements may be **formal** and involve a legal process, payments to help with the costs of caring for the child, and other support services. Some kinship care arrangements are **informal** and involve an assessment process to ensure the safety of the new home along with supportive services for the child and caregivers.

**Kinship care** is also called **kincare, relative care, or grandfamilies** (referring to families where grandparents are raising grandchildren).

If you're a kinship caregiver, turn to **page 6** to find support for the children in your care.

## Types of Kinship Arrangements

**Informal Arrangement:** An informal arrangement is when a relative is raising a child *without* the involvement of a court or child protection agency. Because the law does not recognize informal caregiver arrangements, caretakers may find themselves without the legal ability to make certain decisions for the child, such as enrolling them in school or consenting to medical treatment.

**Legal Guardianship:** Caregivers can acquire custody and legal guardianship of a child, which gives them the right to make certain decisions for the child, such as enrolling them in school or consenting to medical treatment, and they may qualify for State financial assistance.

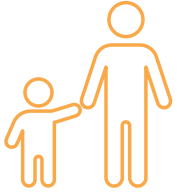
**Foster Care/DCYF Placement:** In New Hampshire, when a child is determined unsafe in their home because of abuse or neglect, they may be removed from that home and placed in care of others. In this situation, parents are required to work towards reunification with their child.

**Adoption:** Adoption is when the Family Court grants full custody and guardianship of a child to an adopting caregiver. Adoptions are a permanent and legal arrangement, but the child's parents must either voluntarily surrender their parental rights through the court process or the court must terminate their parental rights.

For more information on the formal process, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/DHHSkinship>

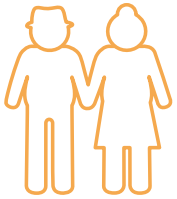
# BY THE NUMBERS

You are not alone. In New Hampshire\*:



**23,750** children live in homes where a relative is head of household.

**6,000** children live with a relative with no parent present.



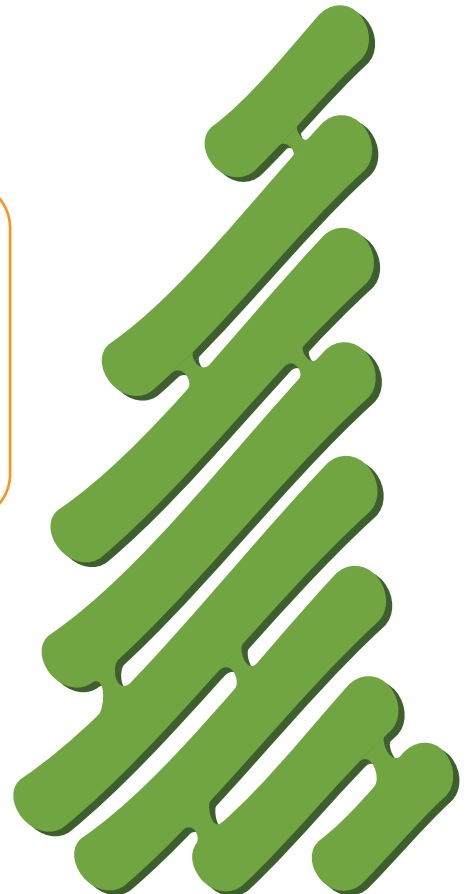
**6,970** grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren in New Hampshire.



**410** children in foster care are being raised by kin.

For every **1** child being raised by kin in foster care, there are **14** being raised by kin outside of foster care.

**Family Support New Hampshire (FSNH)** is New Hampshire's network of Family Resource Centers (FRCs). FSNH allows FRCs to share best practices and better provide for Granite State families. Visit [www.fsnh.org](http://www.fsnh.org) for more information and to locate the **FRC nearest you**.



\*GrandFacts State Fact Sheets. (2021). New Hampshire.  
[www.grandfactsheets.org](http://www.grandfactsheets.org)



# KINSHIP NAVIGATION CAN HELP

## What is the Kinship Navigation Program?

In partnership with New Hampshire's Family Resource Centers (FRCs), the **Kinship Navigation Program** provides free, voluntary, and confidential services throughout New Hampshire, linking kinship caregivers to the program and supports like food assistance, gas to get to appointments, school supplies, respite care, additional financial assistance, and much more.

## What do Kinship Navigators do?

**Kinship Navigators** offer emotional support, education and guidance, and provide information, referral and follow-up services that keep kinship families safe, strong, and successful.

- Help kinship caregivers understand community supports and services specific to their family's needs.
- Ensure that kinship caregivers have access to supports by guiding families through benefits to eligibility applications.
- Provide emotional support to kinship caregivers in times of need.
- Serve as an advocate for both kinship caregivers and children as they navigate a complex network of programs and benefits.

## How do I find a Kinship Navigator?

For more information regarding available Kinship services in your community, please visit [www.nhchildrenstrust.org/kinship](http://www.nhchildrenstrust.org/kinship) to contact the Family Resource Center nearest you, *OR* refer to *page 6* of this guide to contact your local Kinship Navigation Program or make a referral.

**Family Resource Centers (FRCs)** provide family supports, parenting programs and groups, home visiting, child development screening, and information and referral to community resources that empower families to be successful and resilient.





# BENEFITS OF KINSHIP CARE

## For Children and Families

Research shows that living with relatives is better for children and benefits them in several ways.

**Minimizes trauma:** When children are separated from their birth parents, they often experience a sense of loss. Placing a child with kinship caregivers helps preserve family culture, reducing the trauma of removal. Family members are more likely to take sibling groups, live in the same or nearby neighborhoods, and provide the additional comfort of living with someone where a relationship already exists.

**Enhances well-being:** Children in kinship care are more likely to benefit from Protective Factors that improve overall well-being. They experience increased stability, social connections, and support with basic needs from their kinship caregivers that helps them develop social and emotional competence and build resilience during a challenging time.

**Increases permanency for children:** A child is less likely to enter foster care when they're placed in kinship care because relatives are more likely to provide a permanent home through guardianship, custody, or adoption. **Youth who spend 100% of their time placed with kinship caregivers while in out-of-home care transition to legal permanency significantly faster and at a higher rate.\***

**Improves mental and behavioral health:** Children in kinship care have better mental and behavioral health outcomes. Through increased permanency, children can develop close relationships through pre-existing ties with their relative caregiver, allowing for safe, stable, and social and emotional growth.

**Promotes sibling ties:** Children in kinship care are more likely to be placed with or stay connected to their siblings. Family members are often willing to caretake large sibling groups, reducing trauma and minimizing loss.

**Provides a bridge for older youth:** The connection to family or another supportive adult is critical for older youths. Adolescents and teens who have emotionally sustaining and committed relationships with positive role-models increase resiliency and self-sufficiency.

**Preserves cultural identity and community connections:** Children in kinship care are more likely to stay connected to their extended family and maintain their cultures and customs. Family and community connections are critical to healthy child development and fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth.

**Your Kinship Navigator can HELP!**  
See [page 7](#) of this guide to find a Kinship Navigator near you.

Roberts, YH, Shimshock, S, O'Brien, K, Cabrera, J, and Rozanski, T. (2018) From Data to Practice Series Volume 2: The Impact of Placement with Family on Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being. Casey Family Programs. <https://www.casey.org/media/1896-CS-From-Data-to-Practice-2018.pdf>





# CHALLENGES OF KINSHIP CARE

## For Caregivers\*

Depending on their arrangement, kinship caregivers may need additional supports.

**Financial assistance:** Kinship caregivers often face financial hurdles when they add new members to their family. For example, kinship caregivers may be grandparents who are retired with a fixed income. Financial planning or assistance can help kinship families stay strong and resilient.

**Legal assistance:** Many kinship caregivers need affordable legal assistance when making decisions around the custody of the child. For example, they may want to know whether to pursue legal guardianship. Birth parents have a role in many of these family situations, and caregivers need to be informed of their options for protecting the child.

**Counseling resources/Emotional support:** Children in kinship care often need help with trauma, understanding their new living situation, or behavioral challenges that result from separation and/or prior abuse or neglect. Additionally, kinship caregivers may need their own respite time, recreation, counseling, and emotional support from others. Emotional support is often cited as the most important long-term need of many caregivers in Kinship Navigation programs.

**Child care:** Finding affordable child care that meets the family's needs can be a challenge for kinship caregivers. Because a large share of caregivers work outside the home, or require respite time from the demanding role of caring for a child, reliable and affordable child care is critical.

**Transportation:** Transportation can also be a challenge for kinship caregivers. In some cases, caregivers may be unable to participate in alternative program activities or get children to medical appointments because they do not have access to reliable transportation.

**Tutoring for the child:** Some kinship caregivers may feel out of practice with parenting and have difficulty assisting children with certain aspects of their homework. These caregivers might need assistance with tutoring the child so the child's academic performance doesn't suffer.

**Health insurance for the child:** Health insurance for children is an issue for kinship caregivers with and without health insurance. Even if a caregiver has health insurance, not all children are eligible under the caregiver's health plan. Some kinship caregivers may not have health insurance themselves and worry about the cost of health insurance for the child.



**New Hampshire Family Now** podcast features an episode on Relative Care, in Season 1 episode 17.

[www.nhchildrenstrust.org/nhfn/episode/4b83d0a5/s1-e17in-the-role-of-relative-care](http://www.nhchildrenstrust.org/nhfn/episode/4b83d0a5/s1-e17in-the-role-of-relative-care)

**NH**  
**FN**  
New Hampshire  
Family NOW  
A PODCAST OF  
NH CHILDREN'S TRUST

\*Geen, R, Holcomb, P, Jantz, A, Koralek, R, Leos-Urbel, J, & Malm, K. (2001). On their own terms: Supporting kinship care outside of TANF and foster care. The Urban Institute.

# CAREGIVER SELF-CARE

## What is Caregiver Burnout?

Caring for a child when their parents cannot is both rewarding and challenging. Along with its many joys, kinship care can also include various stressors, the emotional impact of which could escalate without proper self-care and support.

If the stress of caretaking isn't properly managed, it can have a profound effect on *your* health, relationships, and state of mind, eventually leading to burnout—a state of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion, affecting both you and the child or children in your care.

Meeting your own physical and emotional needs is just as important as meeting the needs of others. Developing self-care routines and fostering resilience depends on establishing healthy coping mechanisms, maintaining connections with people who support you and your caregiving, and knowing where to turn for help when needed.

### *Signs and symptoms of kinship caregiver stress and burnout:*

Knowing the signs and symptoms of kinship caregiver stress and burnout is important because it allows you to recognize and address the problems at hand before the situation for you and your family becomes worse.

#### *Common signs and symptoms of stress:*

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Cutting back on leisure activities

#### *Common signs and symptoms of burnout:*

- You have much less energy than you once had
- It seems like you catch every cold or bout of flu that's going around
- You're constantly exhausted, even after sleeping or taking a break
- You neglect your own needs
- Your life revolves around caregiving, but it gives you little satisfaction
- You have trouble relaxing, even when help is available
- You're increasingly impatient and irritable
- You feel helpless and hopeless

Recognizing when help is needed and knowing where to find it is an essential part of developing and maintaining resilience as a kinship caregiver. While caring for a child will never be stress-free, help is available through NH's Kinship Navigation Program. Visit [www.fsnh.org](http://www.fsnh.org) for more information and to locate the **FRC nearest you**.

**Are you Parenting a Second Time Around?** A PASTA group may be right for you! PASTA is a free support group for NH grandparents and other kinship caregivers raising children again. Topics include child development, discipline and guidance, caring for yourself as a caregiver, legal issues, and much more. Visit [www.nhchildrenstrust.org/pasta](http://www.nhchildrenstrust.org/pasta) for more information.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## *How do I contact a Kinship Navigator?*

Contact your local Family Resource Center directly (page 6) or reach out to [kinship@nhchildrenstrust.org](mailto:kinship@nhchildrenstrust.org) to be connected to the right resource in your area.

## *What types of referrals will my Kinship Navigator provide?*

Referrals are comprehensive and fall under categories such as financial assistance, legal assistance, mental and physical health services, child development and parenting education, food assistance, and more. Please contact your local Family Resource Center ([page 6](#)) to find out what referral or provider services are available to you and your family.

## *How much will this program cost me and my family?*

Nothing. Kinship Navigation services are FREE, voluntary, and completely confidential.

## *How long can I receive kinship services?*

As long as necessary if the child is under the age of 18 and in your primary care.

## *I am already receiving kinship services and need the phone number of my local agency. Can you help?*

Yes. Kinship programs can be contacted directly through the contact information provided on [page 6](#) of this guide. You may also find contact information for your local Family Resource Center by visiting [www.fsnh.org](http://www.fsnh.org) or dialing [211](#) from any phone in NH to speak with a Referral Specialist.

## *Does the child have to live with me to qualify for the Kinship Navigation Program?*

Yes. The child must reside with you full-time. If there's any doubt whether or not you qualify, please reach out to a Kinship Navigator or your local Family Resource Center.

## *Must I be related to the child?*

No. Kinship caregivers can be licensed foster parents, relatives, or others with whom the child has a close, familial relationship. However, the child must be in your care full-time and the child's parents must not be living in the same house. When in doubt, call your local Kinship program.

## *What is permanency?*

Permanency connects a child with a permanent family through reunification, guardianship, or adoption so that each child has a safe, stable, and nurturing family-like relationship. Legal permanency is a legally binding, permanent relationship with a family.

## *I am a social worker or family support professional. How do I make a referral for a kinship family?*

Please contact [kinship@nhchildrenstrust.org](mailto:kinship@nhchildrenstrust.org) to make a referral for a kinship family.

**Anyone who suspects that a child is being  
abused or neglected is required by NH Law to call:**

DCYF Central Intake Unit: 800-894-5533 (In-state only), 603-271-6562

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## NH Government Resources:

NH Department of Health & Human Services.....	<a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov">www.dhhs.nh.gov</a>
NH Department of Education.....	<a href="http://www.education.nh.gov">www.education.nh.gov</a>
NH Bureau of Family Assistance.....	<a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/bureau-family-assistance">www.dhhs.nh.gov/bureau-family-assistance</a>
NH Division for Children, Youth and Families.....	<a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf">www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf</a>
NH Office of the Child Advocate.....	<a href="http://www.childadvocate.nh.gov">www.childadvocate.nh.gov</a>

## Resources that Connect:

NH Children’s Trust (NHCT) Kinship Navigation Program.....	<a href="http://www.nhchildrenstrust.org/kinship">www.nhchildrenstrust.org/kinship</a>
NH Care Path.....	<a href="http://www.nhcarepath.dhhs.nh.gov">www.nhcarepath.dhhs.nh.gov</a>
Service Link.....	<a href="http://www.servicelink.nh.gov">www.servicelink.nh.gov</a>
NH 211.....	<a href="http://www.211nh.org">www.211nh.org</a>
NH Easy.....	<a href="http://www.nheasy.nh.gov/#/">www.nheasy.nh.gov/#/</a>
Child Care Aware of NH.....	<a href="http://www.nh-connections.org/">www.nh-connections.org/</a>
New Hampshire Homeschooling Coalition.....	<a href="http://www.nhhomeschooling.org">www.nhhomeschooling.org</a>
NAMI NH.....	<a href="http://www.naminh.org/ir/">www.naminh.org/ir/</a>
CASA NH.....	<a href="http://www.casanh.org">www.casanh.org</a>

## Concrete Supports:

NH Food Bank.....	<a href="http://www.nhfoodbank.org">www.nhfoodbank.org</a>
New Hampshire Housing.....	<a href="http://www.nhhfa.org">www.nhhfa.org</a>
New Hampshire Legal Aid.....	<a href="http://www.nhlegalaid.org">www.nhlegalaid.org</a>
Disability Rights Center—NH.....	<a href="http://www.drcnh.org">www.drcnh.org</a>
Step Up Parents.....	<a href="http://www.stepupparents.net">www.stepupparents.net</a>

## Parenting Resources:

Family Support New Hampshire.....	<a href="http://www.fsnh.org">www.fsnh.org</a>
NH Foster & Adoptive Parents.....	<a href="http://www.nhfapa.org">www.nhfapa.org</a>
NH Family Voices.....	<a href="http://www.nhfv.org">www.nhfv.org</a>
Parent Information Center of NH.....	<a href="http://www.picnh.org">www.picnh.org</a>
Macaroni Kids.....	<a href="http://www.national.macaronikid.com">www.national.macaronikid.com</a>
Vroom.....	<a href="http://www.vroom.org">www.vroom.org</a>
Zero to Three.....	<a href="http://www.zerotothree.org">www.zerotothree.org</a>

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Recreational Resources:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of NH.....	<a href="http://www.bbbsnh.org">www.bbbsnh.org</a>
Boys and Girls Clubs in NH.....	<a href="http://www.nhclubkids.com">www.nhclubkids.com</a>
New Hampshire Recreation & Parks.....	<a href="http://www.nhrpa.com">www.nhrpa.com</a>
YMCA Alliance of Northern New England.....	<a href="http://www.nneymcas.org">www.nneymcas.org</a>
YWCA Programs in NH.....	<a href="http://www.ywcanh.org">www.ywcanh.org</a>
Stay Work Play NH.....	<a href="http://www.stayworkplay.org">www.stayworkplay.org</a>

## Grand Families Specific Resources:

Generations United.....	<a href="http://www.gu.org">www.gu.org</a>
GrandFamilies.org.....	<a href="http://www.grandfamilies.org">www.grandfamilies.org</a>
Granite State Independent Living.....	<a href="http://www.gsil.org">www.gsil.org</a>
ServiceLink NH Family Caregiver Support.....	<a href="http://www.servicelink.nh.gov/about-us/nhfcsp.htm">www.servicelink.nh.gov/about-us/nhfcsp.htm</a>

## Recovery Resources:

Granite Pathways.....	<a href="http://www.granitepathwaysnh.org">www.granitepathwaysnh.org</a>
DHHS Recovery Support Services: <a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/health-care/recovery-support-services">www.dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/health-care/recovery-support-services</a>	
NH Drug & Alcohol Treatment Locator: <a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/alcohol-tobacco-other-substance-misuse/nh-drug-alcohol-treatment-locator">www.dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/alcohol-tobacco-other-substance-misuse/nh-drug-alcohol-treatment-locator</a>	
The Doorway NH.....	<a href="http://www.thedoorway.nh.gov">www.thedoorway.nh.gov</a>

## Additional NH Kinship Care Guides:

AARP: <a href="http://www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.html">www.aarp.org/relationships/friends-family/info-08-2011/grandfamilies-guide-getting-started.html</a>	
DHHS Resource Guide for NH Relative Caregivers: <a href="http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/documents/relativecaregivers.pdf">www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/documents/relativecaregivers.pdf</a>	





# NEW HAMPSHIRE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS





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