

Information Bulletin
for
Pre-Professional Assessment and Certification
in
Early Childhood Education



American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
Alexandria, VA 22314

(703) 706-4600
www.aafcs.org

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Overview

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS), a well-respected leader in the FCS field, proudly offers the Pre-Professional Assessment and Certification (Pre-PAC) Program, creating the *premier* family and consumer sciences pre-professional assessment and certification system in the nation. AAFCS added a portfolio of standards-based assessments and industry-recognized certifications to support pre-professional level family and consumer sciences career areas and programs of study for the following reasons:

- To help satisfy the growing emphasis on assessment and accountability in secondary and postsecondary education, including requirements for Perkins funding for Career and Technical Education, and
- To help satisfy the growing emphasis on credentials as a human resource and quality control tool in employment settings throughout the career ladder.

Through these assessments, AAFCS assures that pre-professionals are effectively prepared with the knowledge and skills necessary for demanding career opportunities, therefore providing a workforce to meet the needs of business and industry in the demanding U.S. economy.

Consistent with the soaring demand for quality child care in the United States and recent brain research indicating that high quality child care and early education enhances later success, AAFCS developed a national standards-based competency assessment measuring knowledge and skills in the area of early childhood education.

Description of the Assessment and Certification

Assessments in the Pre-PAC portfolio are high quality, rigorous, valid, and reliable as documented through formal psychometric analysis of pilot test data. The assessments are delivered through a premier online testing platform and are used to validate competency at the pre-professional level.

The Early Childhood Education Assessment and Certification are:

- driven by business and industry standards;
- based on relevant content standards developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and consistent with the National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education and the National Career Clusters Initiative;
- appropriate to validate achievement of competencies related to early childhood education;
- useful in a broad range of education and employment settings, such as secondary and post-secondary education, community-based education programs, and employer-based human resource and staff development programs; and
- advantaged to utilize a gold-standard, computer-based testing platform format that provides for valid and reliable competency measurement and a reporting mechanism for data-driven program improvement, accountability, and individual remediation and acceleration.

Uses of the Assessment and Certification

The assessments have application in a broad range of education, community development, staff development, and human resource settings where there is a need to document or validate competency achievement. Pre-PAC assessments are designed for use with secondary and post-secondary students and programs, pre-professionals working in early employment positions, and employers conducting staff development and training for pre-professionals. Further, the assessment and certification can be used to:

- document exit-level achievement in rigorous secondary programs and lower division post-secondary courses;
- satisfy accountability reporting mandates required by federal Perkins IV legislation as well as state and local policies;
- facilitate seamless articulation, placement, and credit-by exam within post-secondary institutions;
- validate competencies required for employment at the pre-professional and/or paraprofessional level; and
- provide an industry-recognized, pre-professional level certification.

Careers

The Early Childhood Education assessment and certification will address a skill set necessary for success in early childhood education which is one of the fastest growing programs that is reporting employment growth. It is anticipated that this assessment and certification will be targeted for individuals preparing for careers related to early childhood education, such as those associated with:

- child care;
- teaching;
- community-based children's programs;
- social services or counseling for children; and
- after-school programs.

In accordance with those career areas, the assessment is aligned with the following National Career Clusters:



The Career Clusters icons are being used with permission of the:



States' Career Clusters Initiative, 2010, www.careerclusters.org

Assessment Specifications

The assessment specifications provided in this section of the bulletin are intended to provide test candidates with a comprehensive overview of the domains and competencies that are covered on the assessment.

Format

A large bank of high quality, valid test items have been developed for each Pre-PAC assessment. Each test administered is a unique combination of 80, four-option multiple choice items randomly selected from the item bank. Each of the items has only one (1) correct response. Of the 80 items presented on the assessment, 70 are scored and 10 are non-scored (used for piloting and research purposes).

The online testing software presents the items in five to seven groups or “blocks” corresponding to the domain areas identified on the assessment competency list. Testing is conducted under the supervision of proctors using PC or MAC computers in approved local schools and employment sites. During the assessment administration, it is possible to navigate forward and backward between items within a block of items. As items are viewed, they can be answered, skipped, or flagged for later review prior to submitting the item block. The testing software restricts access to other computer functions while the test is open. Local test administrators and proctors are authorized to make testing accommodations formally specified in Individual Education Plans for those with special needs.

In addition to each item being associated with a domain and competency, the items are also designed to assess appropriate cognitive levels necessary for competent practice. Specifically, some items assess at the lower level, some at the middle levels, and some at higher order levels. The items included on each test proportionally represent three cognitive difficulty levels:

- Level 1- 40%;
- Level 2 – 30%; and
- Level 3 – 30%.

Original Bloom’s Taxonomy	Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy	Pre-PAC Cognitive Complexity Level
<u>Knowledge</u> Defines, describes, identifies, labels, lists, matches, names, reads, records, selects, states, views	<u>Remember</u> Recognize, retrieve, identify, recall	1
<u>Comprehension</u> Classifies, describes, discusses, lists, matches, names, reads, records, selects, states, views	<u>Understand</u> Interpret, clarify, translate, illustrate, categorize, classify, conclude, predict, summarize, infer, compare, explain	

<u>Application</u> Assesses, determines, develops, discovers, establishes, informs, predicts, projects, provides, relates, shows, uses	<u>Apply</u> Execute, carry out, use, implement	2
<u>Analysis</u> Breaks down, correlates, differentiates, illustrates, infers, points out, recognizes	<u>Analyze</u> Differentiate, select, focus, organize, outline, attribute, determine point of view	
<u>Synthesis</u> Communicates, compares, contrasts, creates, designs, expresses, formulates, plans, reorganizes, reinforces, substitutes	<u>Evaluate</u> Check, coordinate, detect, monitor, test, critique, judge	3
<u>Evaluation</u> Appraises, compares & contrasts, concludes, criticizes, decides, defends, interprets, judges, justifies, supports	<u>Create</u> Generating, hypothesizing, planning, designing, producing, constructing	

Scoring

Once the assessment is submitted, results will be available immediately to the test candidate. The results provide an overall percentage score, a breakdown of scores corresponding to the domain levels on the competency list, and the indication whether pre-professional certification has been achieved. Based on the rigor and difficulty level of the assessment, the national cut score for pre-professional certification eligibility is established annually by AAFCS. Individuals who complete the assessment and earn the cut-score for certification are granted a time-limited pre-professional certification (3 years).

Scores can be used to demonstrate an individual's learning and competency, pinpoint weaknesses or gaps in performance, improve programs and curriculum, and demonstrate accountability to various stakeholders. Through articulation agreements, scores may be used as the basis for advanced placement and/or credit-by-exam by post secondary institutions. Thus, state and local entities have latitude for independently establishing passing or qualifying scores for other purposes.

Assessment At A Glance

The specific content being assessed by the items on the assessment follows the test specifications outlined in this section of the bulletin. Please note the number of items on the assessment in each domain.

Domain	Weighting	Number of Items
1. Career Paths	14.3%	10
2. Developmentally Appropriate Practices	14.3%	10
3. Curriculum and Instruction	14.3%	10
4. Learning Environment	14.3%	10
5. Positive Relationships with Children	14.3%	10
6. Professional Practices and Standards	14.3%	10
7. Family and Community Involvement	14.3%	10

Content Outline for Domains and Competencies

The following outline provides an overview of the content addressed within the domains and competencies on the assessment. The outline is provided as a tool to be used for guidance in preparing for the assessment and is not intended to be totally inclusive. The outline's numbered concepts for each competency are meant to be representative rather than prescriptive.

Domain 1: Career Paths

Competency 1A: Explain the roles and functions of individuals engaged in early childhood, education, and services.

- 1.A.1 Roles of child care employees
- 1.A.2 Roles of child care center directors
- 1.A.3 Role of parents engaged in early childhood services
- 1.A.4 Confidentiality
- 1.A.5 Handling communications
- 1.A.6 Conducting program and personnel evaluations
- 1.A.7 Handling complaints
- 1.A.8 Child advocacy
- 1.A.9 Establishing the facility's environment
- 1.A.10 Management of a facility
- 1.A.11 Continuing education

Competency 1B: Analyze opportunities for employment and entrepreneurial endeavors in early childhood, education, and services.

- 1.B.1 Opportunities in child care centers
- 1.B.2 Opportunities through Head Start or similar government programs/agencies
- 1.B.3 Opportunities in family child care
- 1.B.4 Opportunities in employer-provided child care
- 1.B.5 Opportunities in faith-based child care

Competency 1C: Identify the personal qualities and abilities needed to be effective with children.

- 1.C.1 Knowledge of child development
- 1.C.2 Communication skills required
- 1.C.3 Attitudes and dispositions
- 1.C.4 Demonstrating initiative and confidence in working with children
- 1.C.5 Being dependable, committed, and consistent
- 1.C.6 Having a commitment to and compassion toward children
- 1.C.7 Physical requirements and abilities

Competency 1D: Summarize education and training requirements and opportunities for career paths in early childhood, education, and services.

- 1.D.1 Center or program directors
- 1.D.2 Associate teachers
- 1.D.3 Licensed or certified teachers
- 1.D.4 Certified specialists
- 1.D.5 Curriculum specialists

Competency 1E: Analyze the effects of early childhood, education, and services on local, state, national, and global economies.

- 1.E.1 Benefits for employers and businesses
- 1.E.2 Future need or outlook for child care employees
- 1.E.3 Role of dual-earner, dual-career parents and families
- 1.E.4 Role and impact of quality child care

Competency 1F: Create an employment portfolio for use when applying for internships and work-based learning opportunities in education and early childhood.

- 1.F.1 Developing a résumé
- 1.F.2 Job interview skills
- 1.F.3 Opportunities for job shadowing and internships
- 1.F.4 Components of a portfolio

Competency 1G: Analyze the role of professional organizations in education and early childhood.

- 1.G.1 Membership, benefits, and professional development through professional associations and organizations
- 1.G.2 Professional associations and organizations related to early childhood (i.e., National Association for the Education of Young Children; Association for Childhood Education International; Family Child Care Association)
- 1.G.3 Role and purpose of Head Start and similar programs
- 1.G.4 Advocacy efforts on behalf of children

Domain 2: Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Competency 2A: Analyze child development theories and their implications for educational and childcare practices.

- 2.A.1 Cognitive development: Jean Piaget
- 2.A.2 Psychosocial development: Erik Erikson
- 2.A.3 Moral development: Lawrence Kohlberg

Competency 2B: Apply a variety of assessment methods to observe and interpret children's growth and development.

- 2.B.1 Rating scales
- 2.B.2 Observation (Formal and informal)
- 2.B.3 Appropriate documentation
- 2.B.4 Checklists
- 2.B.5 Anecdotal records and reports
- 2.B.6 Participation charts
- 2.B.7 Developmental norms and milestones

Competency 2C: Analyze cultural and environmental influences when assessing children's development.

- 2.C.1 Gender equality and discrimination
- 2.C.2 Sensitive periods of child development
- 2.C.3 Attachment patterns
- 2.C.4 Nature vs. nurture
- 2.C.5 Importance of environments (encouraging, affectionate, etc)

Competency 2D: Analyze abilities and needs of children and their effects on children's growth and development.

- 2.D.1 Physical needs of children
- 2.D.2 Emotional needs of children
- 2.D.3 Social needs of children
- 2.D.4 Cognitive needs of children
- 2.D.5 Self-help skills

Competency 2E: Analyze strategies that promote children's growth and development.

- 2.E.1 Solitary play
- 2.E.2 Parallel play
- 2.E.3 Cooperative play
- 2.E.4 Associative play
- 2.E.5 Appropriate books and toys
- 2.E.6 Use of learning centers

Domain 3: Curriculum and Instruction

Competency 3A: Analyze a variety of curriculum and instructional models for appropriateness in meeting children's developmental needs and interests.

- 3.A.1 Learning objectives
- 3.A.2 Instructional strategies
- 3.A.3 Behavioral objectives
- 3.A.4 Conditions of performance
- 3.A.5 Developmental goals
- 3.A.6 Lesson plans and block plans
- 3.A.7 Discovery models
- 3.A.8 Instructional models

Competency 3B: Implement learning activities in all curriculum areas that meet the developmental needs of children.

- 3.B.1 Activities that promote gross motor development
- 3.B.2 Activities that promote fine motor development
- 3.B.3 Activities that promote eye-hand coordination
- 3.B.4 Creative activities (i.e., building, art, sculpting, etc.)

Competency 3C: Implement an integrated curriculum that incorporates a child's language, learning styles, early experiences, and cultural values.

- 3.C.1 Developmental curriculum
- 3.C.2 Multicultural curriculum
- 3.C.3 Art and creative curriculum
- 3.C.4 Use of math, science, language, and social studies in everyday learning
- 3.C.5 Use of visual, tactile, and kinesthetic activities

Competency 3D: Demonstrate a variety of teaching methods to meet individual needs of children.

- 3.D.1 Direct learning experiences
- 3.D.2 Indirect learning experiences
- 3.D.3 Questioning techniques

Competency 3E: Arrange learning centers that provide for children's exploration, discovery, and development.

- 3.E.1 Manipulation
- 3.E.2 Reading
- 3.E.3 Dramatic play
- 3.E.4 Art
- 3.E.5 Math
- 3.E.6 Sensory
- 3.E.7 Science

Competency 3F: Establish activities, routines, and transitions.

- 3.F.1 Importance of routines
- 3.F.2 Seamless transitions
- 3.F.3 Examples of routines, transitions, and procedures
- 3.F.4 Integrating activities

Domain 4: Learning Environment

Competency 4A: Manage physical space to maintain a learning environment that is safe and healthy and encourages physical activity.

- 4.A.1 Space that encourages exploration and experimentation
- 4.A.2 Requirements for adequate space
- 4.A.3 Learning center placement and maintenance
- 4.A.4 Use and care of fire extinguishers

Competency 4B: Apply safe and healthy practices that comply with state regulations.

- 4.B.1 Health policies of facility
- 4.B.2 Temperature of children
- 4.B.3 Types of thermometers
- 4.B.4 Communicable diseases
- 4.B.5 Burns
- 4.B.6 Head lice
- 4.B.7 Abrasions, fractures, strains, and sprains
- 4.B.8 Diabetes
- 4.B.9 CPR
- 4.B.10 Heimlich Maneuver

Competency 4C: Implement strategies to teach children health, safety, and sanitation habits.

- 4.C.1 Appropriate eating practices
- 4.C.2 MyPyramid guidelines
- 4.C.3 Nutritious snacks
- 4.C.4 Chronic and acute health problems of children

Competency 4D: Plan safe and healthy meals and snacks.

- 4.D.1 Nutrients and their functions
- 4.D.2 MyPyramid guidelines
- 4.D.3 Food groups and examples of representative foods

Competency 4E: Document symptoms of child abuse and neglect and use appropriate procedures to report suspected abuse or neglect to the designated authorities.

- 4.E.1 Neglect
- 4.E.2 Emotional abuse
- 4.E.3 Physical abuse
- 4.E.4 Sexual abuse
- 4.E.5 Malnutrition
- 4.E.6 Privacy laws
- 4.E.7 Proper documentation
- 4.E.8 Reporting procedures

Competency 4F: Implement basic health practices and prevention procedures for workers and children regarding childhood illness and communicable diseases.

- 4.F.1 Procedures for emergencies
- 4.F.2 Health inspections
- 4.F.3 Communicable diseases

Domain 5: Positive Relationships with Children

Competency 5A: Apply developmentally appropriate guidelines for guiding children's behavior.

- 5.A.1 Direct and indirect guidance techniques
- 5.A.2 Use of warnings
- 5.A.3 Use of discipline

Competency 5B: Demonstrate problem-solving skills with children.

- 5.B.1 Framing children's choices
- 5.B.2 Using positive guidance to handle sensitive situations
- 5.B.3 Developing self-control

Competency 5C: Demonstrate interpersonal skills that promote positive and productive relationships with children.

- 5.C.1 Positive caregiver attitudes
- 5.C.2 Positive caregiver actions
- 5.C.3 Nurturing environment
- 5.C.4 Positive teacher/child interactions
- 5.C.5 Active listening
- 5.C.6 Tone of voice

Competency 5D: Implement strategies for constructive and supportive interactions between children and families.

- 5.D.1 Setting limits
- 5.D.2 Dealing with undesirable behavior
- 5.D.3 Evaluating situations and selecting appropriate strategy
- 5.D.4 Strategies that prevent behavior problems

Competency 5E: Analyze children’s developmental progress and summarize developmental issues and concerns.

- 5.E.1 Use of questioning to increase child’s knowledge
- 5.E.2 Appropriate skills for age group
- 5.E.3 Appropriate skills for developmental stages

Domain 6: Professional Practices and Standards

Competency 6A: Utilize opportunities for continuing training and education.

- 6.A.1 Safe environment changes
- 6.A.2 Child advocacy
- 6.A.3 Legislation and regulation
- 6.A.4 New practices and techniques
- 6.A.5 Professional development
- 6.A.6 Professional association membership
- 6.A.7 Teacher mentors
- 6.A.8 Child Development Associate (CDA)

Competency 6B: Apply professional ethical standards as accepted by the recognized professional organizations.

- 6.B.1 Privacy laws
- 6.B.2 Collaboration
- 6.B.3 Teamwork
- 6.B.4 Professional practices and standards
- 6.B.5 NAEYC Code of Ethics
- 6.B.6 Benefits of participation in professional associations

Competency 6C: Implement federal, state, and local standards, policies, regulations, and laws that affect children, families, and programs.

- 6.C.1 Confidentiality
- 6.C.2 Special needs
- 6.C.3 Reporting of accidents
- 6.C.4 Safe environments
- 6.C.5 Facility, grounds, and equipment
- 6.C.6 Licensing standards
- 6.C.7 Minimum requirements for space, equipment, children, and nutrition

Competency 6D: Demonstrate enthusiasm, initiative, and commitment to programs goals and improvements.

- 6.D.1 NAEYC core values
- 6.D.2 Implementation of program goals
- 6.D.3 Activities that encourage program goal achievement

Competency 6E: Apply business management skills to planning businesses in early childhood, education, and services.

- 6.E.1 Tuition and fees
- 6.E.2 Writing proposals
- 6.E.3 Profit-loss statements
- 6.E.4 Wage hour laws
- 6.E.5 Net and gross wages
- 6.E.6 Payroll deductions
- 6.E.7 Tax forms and fees
- 6.E.8 Insurance
- 6.E.9 Accreditation standards
- 6.E.10 Licensing
- 6.E.11 Employee/child ratio

Domain 7: Family and Community Involvement

Competency 7A: Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity in family units and roles.

- 7.A.1 Enrollment procedures
- 7.A.2 Cultural differences in behavior
- 7.A.3 Sensitivity to various family structures and situations
- 7.A.4 Sensitivity to family economic situations

Competency 7B: Plan communication strategies to strengthen parent/child care provider relationships.

- 7.B.1 Procedures in the facility
- 7.B.2 Guidance techniques used in the facility
- 7.B.3 Routines of the center
- 7.B.4 Regulations of the center
- 7.B.5 Formal and informal parent contact
- 7.B.6 Appropriate information to be discussed

Competency 7C: Determine community resources available to children and their families.

- 7.C.1 Parent and community volunteers
- 7.C.2 Employee and community relationships
- 7.C.3 Community services

Competency 7D: Describe methods for facilitating respectful, reciprocal relationships between child care providers and the community.

- 7.D.1 Parent conferences
- 7.D.2 Parent group discussions
- 7.D.3 Community involvement

Sample Assessment Items

A series of sample test items is provided below. These items are not intended to serve as a study mechanism, but to familiarize candidates with the format, style, and structure of the items that can be expected on the assessments. Always choose the one best answer.

1. Jillian warned Cori that if she threw the ball and hit another child with the ball again, Cori would have to put the toy away. When Cori hit another child with the ball again, Jillian took away the ball. Jillian was exhibiting which of the following important characteristics of a child care worker? (Domain 1, Competency C)
 - A. Flexibility
 - B. Consistency
 - C. Consideration
 - D. Dependability
2. The best example of cooperative play below is _____. (Domain 2, Competency C)
 - A. two children sitting beside each other playing with different toys
 - B. a child giving another child a toy truck to play with when he was finished playing with the truck
 - C. three children in the manipulative center putting together a puzzle
 - D. a child saying “yes, thank you” when offered a toy by the child care instructor
3. All the following statements about the development of preschoolers are true **EXCEPT** _____. (Domain 2, Competency D)
 - A. preschoolers have vivid imaginations
 - B. preschoolers have trouble with concepts of time
 - C. preschoolers want to please and help caregivers around the home
 - D. preschoolers engage in small muscle play the greatest portion of the day
4. Watching a video about the first “space walk” might be a social studies activity dealing with _____. (Domain 3, Competency C)
 - A. ecology
 - B. geography
 - C. government
 - D. multi-cultural learning

5. Bart got his foot caught in the electric revolving door. The skin is not broken, nor is there open bleeding, but blood does appear to be pooling just under the skin like a bruise. Bart has a(n) _____. (Domain 4, Competency B)
 - A. fracture
 - B. abrasion
 - C. open wound
 - D. closed wound

6. Limits should focus on _____. (Domain 5, Competency D)
 - A. the physical needs of the children
 - B. the most popular classroom centers
 - C. making work easier for the teacher
 - D. actions and behaviors that reflect center goals

7. Amy has a child in her classroom with lazy eye, also called amblyopia. Which of the following should Amy do? (Domain 5, Competency C)
 - A. Amy should refer this child to content mastery.
 - B. Amy should give this child preferred seating in the front of the class.
 - C. Amy should provide extra room for the child and the child's wheelchair.
 - D. Amy should isolate the child and provide work in a contained area.

8. According to minimum standards, all the following are required to be reported immediately **EXCEPT** _____. (Domain 6, Competency C)
 - A. injury requiring medical attention
 - B. suspected incidences of child abuse
 - C. any event that endangered a child's safety
 - D. the hiring of a new child care assistant

9. All of the following are important parent/teacher communications **EXCEPT** _____. (Domain 7, Competency B)
 - A. food eaten at the child care
 - B. time spent in transition activities
 - C. bowel movements that occurred at the child care
 - D. amount of time the child slept at the child care

10. Before starting to volunteer in an early childhood education classroom parents and/or community people should attend a(n) _____. (Domain 7, Competency C)
 - A. parent/teacher conference
 - B. parent group discussions
 - C. orientation session
 - D. networking session

Answer Key:

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. D |
| 2. C | 7. B |
| 3. D | 8. D |
| 4. B | 9. B |
| 5. D | 10. C |

Suggested Preparation Techniques

The assessment measures two things: knowledge of the subject matter and ability to take an assessment. The first depends on the preparation, instruction, and experience gained in the selected content area. The second depends on self-confidence and experience with multiple-choice questions. It also depends upon the ability to recognize related information or solutions to problem situations.

In preparation for the assessments, test candidates should:

- Avoid situations that would trigger emotions such as worry, anger, depression, and lack of confidence right before the test day. These emotions interfere with memory and are sometimes called “memory thieves.”
- Follow the directions! If read too quickly, something important may be missed.
- Read each item very carefully and avoid jumping to conclusions based upon a quick skimming of the wording.
- See if they can answer the item before looking at the four (4) response options.
- Never think they have immediately spotted the correct response. “Back into” the correct response by first eliminating the incorrect choices.
- Answer each item. Look for clues in the item and even in the choices. If able to eliminate some options, the chances of selecting the correct answer are improved. Use the “flag” options to denote items to come back to within the item block.
- Read the “Candidate Guide to Assessments.” It is important to understand details about online testing and navigation.

Suggested Instructional Resources

The Pre-PAC Instructional Resource Directory provides a list of suggested resources providing content addressed within Pre-PAC assessments. Development panel members and instructors have identified resources that would be relevant and useful in addressing the domains and competencies within the assessment. Use of the references and resources do not guarantee successful completion of the assessment.

AAFCS does not endorse any external products (textbooks, curriculum, etc), vendors, consultants, or documentation that may be referenced in the Directory. While every effort will be made to ensure accuracy and reliability of content, AAFCS assumes no responsibility for errors or for use of the information provided. Additionally, AAFCS disclaims any and all liability for any claims or damages that may result from providing information contained on the site, including any Web sites maintained by third parties and linked to the Pre-PAC site. The responsibility for content rests with the organizations that provide the information. The inclusion of links from the site does not imply endorsement by AAFCS.

The Pre-PAC Instructional Resource Directory is available online at <https://www.aafcs.org/credentialing-center/pre-pac/portfolio/ece>

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