



Bureau of HIV and STI Programs

Communications and Social Media Toolkit





About This Toolkit

Public health messaging is a key part in community engagement and awareness of HIV and STI prevention, testing and treatment. Social media is a quick, efficient way to deliver a range of information to a wide audience. Messaging shared across platforms can be unique, individually created content or pre-made, shared content from other pages and platforms. According to [Pew Research Center](#), more than 50% of adults regularly got news from a digital device (smartphones, laptops, etc.), with 58% preferring to get news on digital devices. This means using social media is more important now than ever before.

The Bureau of HIV and STI Programs (BHSP) Communications and Social Media Toolkit was created to help agencies establish, build and maintain consistent communications and standards for public health messaging. This toolkit breaks down several key factors for successful messaging, including using plain language, developing graphics, tips for consistent posting or reposting of content and much more. BHSP's goal is to build off other available resources, such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) content, national organization toolkits, etc., to help set agencies up with the foundational tools to build their platforms and engage with the community.

For questions or technical assistance, please contact BHSP via the [STI/HIV Operations and Resource System \(SHOARS\)](#) or MDHHS-SHOARS-Support@Michigan.gov.

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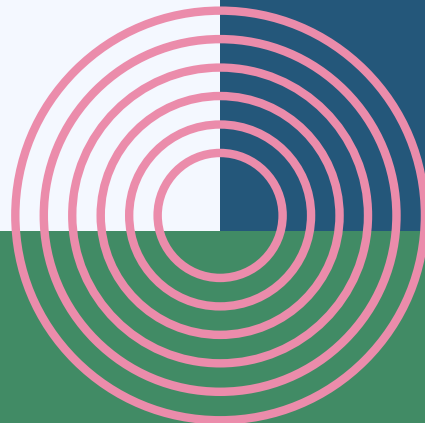
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Health Literacy and Plain Language

Health Literacy

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Healthy People 2030 initiative defines health literacy two ways:

- **Personal health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
- **Organizational health literacy** is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Nearly nine out of 10 adults struggle to understand and use health information when it has unfamiliar or complex terms. Some best practices to address health literacy include:

- Create user-friendly materials that are [accurate, accessible and actionable](#).
- Use plain language and develop materials in multiple languages.
- Understand your audience, including their preferred communication channels.
- Develop and test materials with your audience.

Resources:

- [Health Literacy](#) (CDC).
- [Health Literacy Training](#) (CDC).
- [Health Literacy and Plain Language Training](#) (CDC).
- [We Heart Health Literacy](#) (CommunicateHealth).

Plain Language

Plain language is communication that is clear, accessible and useful. Plain language helps your audience find what they need, understand the information the first time they read or hear it and use the information to meet their needs. When creating communications:

- Use everyday words and avoid jargon.
- Use short sentences with an active voice.
- Use “you”.
- BLUF (bottom line up front): Put the most important information you want your audience to read and understand at the front/top of the communication.
- Use headers and lists.
- Use descriptive links.

Resources:

- [Plain Language Materials & Resources](#) (CDC).
- [Plain Language for Public Health](#) (Public Health Communications Collaborative).
- [Checklist for Plain Language](#) (plainlanguage.gov).

Numeracy and Avoiding Stigma

Numeracy

Numeracy is a person's ability to understand and use numbers and data. When creating communications, it's important to make sure numbers and data support your message and are presented in a clear and concise way. How numbers and data are presented determines how, or if, the information being shared is understood and acted upon by an audience.

Resources:

- [Numeracy](#) (CDC).
- [Numeracy: Health Literacy and Clear Communication for Numbers and Statistics](#) (CDC).
- [Epi 101: The Basics of Epidemiology](#) (MDHHS).
- [Best Practices for Infographics in Public Health](#) (CDC).

Avoiding Stigma

Stigma perpetuates HIV and STIs. Whenever possible, avoid using language like "high risk people," "risky behaviors," "infected," "infection," etc. and consider using inclusive language in communication materials.

Along with some of the examples below, these helpful resources provide a more comprehensive overview:

- [Ways to Stop HIV Stigma and Discrimination](#) (CDC).
- [Preferred Terms for Select Population Groups & Communities](#) (CDC).
- [Culture and Language](#) (CDC).
- [Resources for Professionals](#) (CommunicateHealth).

Instead of these	Use these
HIV infected	Person with HIV (PWH) or diagnosed with HIV.
High-risk people	People who have an increased likelihood/are more likely to be exposed.
Became infected	Contracted, acquired or diagnosed with.
Drug-users/addicts/drug abusers	Persons who use drugs/people who inject drugs.
Homeless people/the homeless	People experiencing homelessness.

Style Guide and Branding

When creating social media and communications, it is best to establish clear, consistent and cohesive messaging that can be easily recognized by a viewer. This can be done by setting a standard of specific colors and fonts to use in communications, and an identifiable look to what you post. Note the CDC graphics below with similar colors, fonts and images:



Style Guide

A style guide compiles and labels a brand's standard colors, text options, logos and messaging to easily replicate communications and materials. For more information on the fundamentals of building a cohesive image, visit [ASTHO Branding Resource Guide For Health Departments](#).

Accessibility

As you identify colors and text options that your agency would like to use, please keep the following in mind:

- Is the text easy to read? Text should be larger than 11pt and a sans-serif font, avoiding hand-written or script text and all caps, when possible.
- Are the colors accessible to view for those with visual impairments? A [contrast checker](#) can help make sure colors can be viewed by everyone.

Resources

- [ADA Requirements: Effective Communication](#) (ADA.gov).
- [Communicating Effectively for People with Disabilities](#) (ADA.gov).
- [Accessible Social Media for Public Health](#) (Public Health Communications Collaborative).
- [Creating Digitally Accessible Materials for Public Health Campaigns](#) (CDC).



Welcome to
the BHSP
Communications
and Social Media
Toolkit.



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SHOARS

SHOARS is a customer relationship management system that can be accessed via MiLogin. SHOARS allows BHSP partners to engage with our diverse resources.

Registering for SHOARS

If you are not in SHOARS and do not have a state of Michigan email, you can [register for SHOARS](#) to order printed materials, request data, etc. For more information, please visit Michigan.gov/SHOARS or email MDHHS-SHOARS-Support@Michigan.gov.

Requesting HIV and STI Data

If you would like to request data on people with HIV or affected by STIs in Michigan to include in your communications that is not already available at [HIV & STI Data & Statistics](#), please use SHOARS to submit a data request.

Ordering BHSP Printed Communication Materials

SHOARS is your go-to resource for ordering BHSP printed communication materials like brochures, palm cards, posters, campaign materials and more. For a full list of materials available to order in SHOARS, please refer to [HIV and STI Health Promotion Materials](#).

PARTNERS ARE PATIENTS TOO
Your sex and/or needle sharing partners can get help if they have been exposed to a sexually transmitted infection (STI), including HIV. Scan each QR code for more information.

PARTNER SERVICES FOR HIV AND STIs
A free program that confidentially notifies sex and/or needle sharing partners exposed to HIV and/or other STIs, such as gonorrhea and syphilis.

PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP) FOR HIV
PrEP is a medication for sex and/or needle sharing partners. It can be taken as a daily pill or as an injection given every two months. Both can reduce the chance of getting HIV from sex and/or injection drug use. When taken as directed, PrEP is highly effective for preventing the transmission of HIV.

UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMITTABLE (U=U)
A person with HIV who is on treatment, has achieved an undetectable viral load and maintains it for six months and thereafter, cannot transmit HIV through sex to their partners.

LINK-UP MICHIGAN
Link-Up Michigan connects persons living with HIV who are not currently receiving HIV/AIDS care to both medical and non-medical services, case management, and employment support. It provides individuals with intensive support through an existing community support.

EXPEDITED PARTNER THERAPY FOR S
Allows sexual partners to get antibiotic medications as prescriptions, without having to wait for a doctor's visit. If exposed to gonorrhea, chlamydia and/or trichomonas.

With these tools, you can step the step.
For more information, visit [Michigan.gov/SHOARS](#)

Resources
For more information on PrEP, visit [Michigan.gov/PrEP](#) or scan the QR code.

For questions, call the Michigan HIV/STI Hotline or chat online: 800-872-2437 [michiganhealthinfo.com](#)

PrEP for Women
CDC PrEP for Women: [CDC.gov/PrEPforWomen](#)

PrEP Payment Assistance Resources
Gilead Advancing Access Program: [Gileadadvancingaccess.com](#)

VIV Connect for Aphrodite
VIV Connect for Aphrodite: [VIVconnect.com/for-providers](#) financial support.

For additional resources, call 211 or visit [michigan.gov/HIV-STI-Services](#).

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for Women

What is PrEP?
Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is medication that can help prevent HIV. Taking PrEP as prescribed can reduce the chance of getting HIV by up to 99% for sexual encounters and 74% for people who share needles or other injection equipment.

Who should consider taking PrEP?
PrEP might be right for you if you relate to any of the following:

- Inconsistent condom use during sex.
- Had a sexually transmitted infection in the past six months.
- Have sex without a condom with someone whose HIV status is unknown.
- Share needles or other injection equipment.
- Exchange sex for money, drugs, housing or other things.
- Have sex with someone who is living with HIV and has not been undetectable for six months.

If you think PrEP is the right step...
Talk to your health care provider!

Things to consider when you talk to your health care provider about PrEP:

- Know why PrEP is a good option for you.
- Prepare questions you may have about PrEP.
- Be open and honest.

If your health care provider is uncomfortable prescribing PrEP, you have other options:

- Ask your provider to co-locate PrEP at Henry Ford Health Line at 313-975-0332.
- Request a referral to an PrEP care provider with more PrEP.
- Locate another health care provider by visiting [Michigan.gov/PrEP](#) or scanning the code.

You can also reach a local health department community-based org. get connected to.

What are STIs?
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), also known as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), are passed to another person during vaginal, anal and oral sex. All STIs can be treated and most STIs can be cured.

How do I prevent STIs?

- Use barrier protection (like condoms) the correct way every time you have sex.
- Get tested before having sex with a new partner and ask your partner about their STI status.
- Limit your number of sex partners to reduce your likelihood of exposure.

What's next?

- Knowledge is power: Many STIs have no symptoms. The only way to know your status is to get tested. Scan the QR code to find a nearby testing location.
- Consider your partner(s): Encourage them to get tested and if you have an STI, ask your provider about medications for your partner(s) (Expedited Partner Therapy or EPT).

What is PrEP?
Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is medication that can help prevent HIV. Taking PrEP as prescribed can reduce the chance of getting HIV by up to 99% for sexual encounters and 74% for people who share needles or other injection equipment.

How do I know if I am at risk?
PrEP is for people who are not having HIV but are at risk of getting it. PrEP is for people who are not having HIV but are at risk of getting it. PrEP is for people who are not having HIV but are at risk of getting it. PrEP is for people who are not having HIV but are at risk of getting it.

I've decided PrEP is right for me, what now?

- Discuss your options with a PrEP Navigator or your health care provider.
- To maximize effectiveness, take your medication as prescribed.
- PrEP does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other bloodborne illnesses, such as hepatitis B and C.

YOUR LIFE MATTERS
Using drugs may increase the chance of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including syphilis.

- Syphilis is rising among Michigan women. Recent data tells us that 13% of women in early stage syphilis described themselves as a person who has injected drugs.
- Testing and treatment are key to preventing syphilis.
- If you are pregnant, get prenatal care including testing for syphilis. Syphilis in babies is preventable.
- For more information about syphilis, visit [CDC.gov/STD/syphilis](#).

Reduce the Harms of Drug Use

- Carry naloxone, a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids.
- Train those around you to carry and use naloxone.
- Make a safety plan for every time drugs are used.
- Seek medical care as soon as possible for any wounds or injuries.

Do not use alone.

- Use new, sterile syringes and equipment every time drugs are injected.
- Get tested for HIV, hepatitis C, and syphilis.
- Consider PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), a medicine that people can take to prevent HIV.

Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) provide:

- New syringes and equipment at no cost.
- HIV, hepatitis C, and syphilis testing, education, and help finding affordable care.
- Overdose prevention education, including safer injection practices.
- Sharps containers and safe disposal of used syringes.
- Naloxone kits and training.
- An open door — SSP staff will meet you where you are at.

Find Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Testing

Find a Syringe Service Program (SSP)

UNDetectable = UNTransmittable

IT'S A FACT:
Medical evidence shows that people living with HIV on effective treatment cannot pass it through sex.

Learn more of [Michigan.gov/HIVSTI](#)

MDHHS

Social Media and Creating Content

Social media content includes many different things like graphics, stories and videos. A quick way to share information is to repost content from other pages, like the MDHHS social media pages.



Facebook: [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#)



Instagram: [@michiganhhs](#)



X: [Michigan HHS Dept | @MichiganHHS](#)



Threads: [Michigan HHS | @michiganhhs](#)

Tips for Creating and Maintaining Social Media Platforms

When creating accounts on multiple platforms like Facebook, Instagram and X, having consistent account names/handles makes it easy for your audience to find you. If you add contact information, use shared inboxes or central lines.

Tips for Creating Content

If your agency is creating social media content, use your established style guide or brand standards to keep posts consistent and cohesive. Images and graphics should [reflect diverse experiences of health](#). When creating content, keep in mind:

- Each platform has its own preferred image size and maximum character count.
- Content should be accessible. For example, all colors have enough contrast between them, font is legible and large enough to read and contains proper capitalization, and images and graphics include alternative text (alt text).
- Graphics and images relate to the content you are posting about, are not sensitive or graphic depictions and do not cover text. If you are using stock images, make sure you have the appropriate rights to use them and follow any guidelines. Example image sites include [Unsplash](#), [iStock](#) and [Adobe Stock](#).

Things to Consider When Posting Content

- Who is my intended audience?
- What goals or outcomes am I hoping to achieve with this post?
- Is my message clear for someone who may not have a public health background?
- Posts can be scheduled ahead of time on platforms to create consistent posting patterns. You cannot schedule a repost of another page's social media.

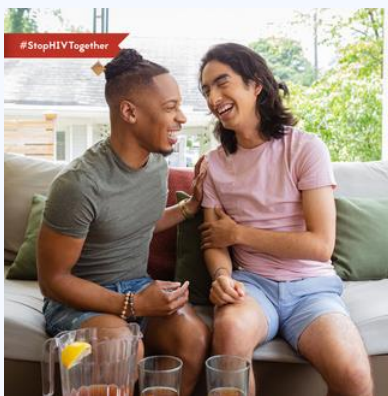
Resources

- [Social Media Toolkit for Health Departments](#) (ASTHO).

HIV and STI Social Media Content

Various organizations have social media toolkits/libraries with pre-made content that can be posted directly on your organization's accounts to promote testing, sexual health and increase prevention efforts. Some examples of social media toolkits/libraries and posts are below.

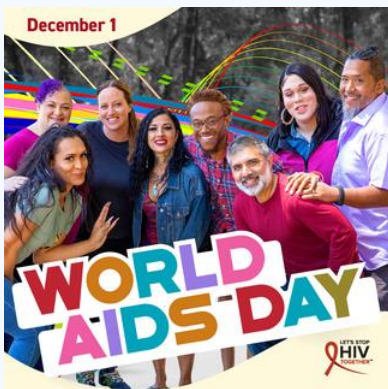
- [Let's Stop HIV Together Social Media Toolkit](#) (CDC).
- [Greater Than HIV Videos, Digital Banners, Graphics](#) (Kaiser Family Foundation).
- [Awareness Days](#) (HIV.gov).
- [HIV Awareness Days](#) (CDC).
- [STI Communication Resources & Social Media](#) (CDC).
- [Doxy PEP Marketing Tools](#) (National Coalition of STD Directors).



Example Copy: If you have HIV, getting and staying undetectable can help you stay healthy and live your best life. Learn more about the benefits of being undetectable: [CDC.gov/HIVTreatment](https://www.cdc.gov/HIVTreatment).
#StopHIVTogether



Example Copy: Do you know or think you may have been exposed to an STI? It might not be too late to take charge of your sexual health! Talk to a health care providers and see if doxy PEP is right for you.



Example Copy: Today is #WorldAIDSDay, a day to unite with others around the world to prevent HIV, support people with HIV and remember those who have lost their lives to an HIV-related illness. Let's #StopHIVTogether. [Bit.ly/3DhBLWI](https://bit.ly/3DhBLWI)

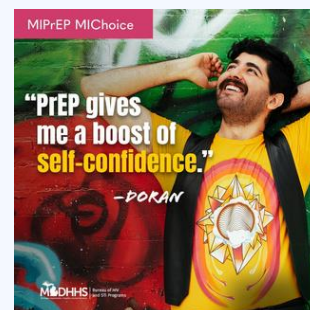
BHSP Social Media Toolkits

The following BHSP social media toolkit posts are available to share on your organization's social media accounts. **Please do not make any modifications to the social media posts within these toolkits. Graphics and copy must be used as is.**

MIPrEP MIChoice Media Campaign

"[MIPrEP MIChoice](#)" shines a spotlight on authentic stories from real people across Michigan who use PrEP to prevent the spread of HIV. Each personal story represents a step towards ending the stigma around HIV and promoting a healthier future for all.

[MIPrEP MIChoice Social Media Toolkit](#)



Mahogany Blue Media Campaign

"[Mahogany Blue](#)" focuses on sharing information about PrEP with Black women. The "Mahogany Blue" campaign is an adaptation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) "[She's Well](#)" and highlights Black women of various skin tones, shapes and ages appearing in informational materials.

[Mahogany Blue Social Media Toolkit](#)



Stop Syphilis Campaign

In response to increasing rates of syphilis, especially among pregnant persons (congenital syphilis), MDHHS launched the [Stop Syphilis campaign](#). This campaign underscores MDHHS's commitment to raising awareness about the importance of syphilis testing among sexually active individuals living in Michigan.

[Stop Syphilis Social Media Toolkit](#)



Ending HIV Together

[Ending HIV Together: Michigan's Equitable Plan](#), developed with four years of community engagement and input sessions, aligns with national and global initiatives to end the HIV epidemic, reinforcing the state's commitment to address the disparities that persist in health care access and outcomes for HIV.

[Ending HIV Together Social Media Toolkit](#)



HIV/STI Awareness Days

FEBRUARY

7
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day



14-21
National Condom Week



MARCH

10
National Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day



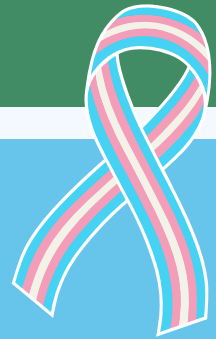
20
National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day



17-21
National LGBTQ Health Awareness Week

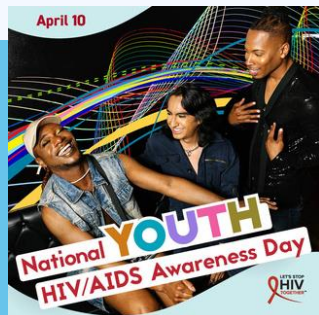


31
International Transgender Day of Visibility



APRIL

10
National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day



18
National Transgender HIV Testing Day



14-20
National STI Awareness Week



MAY

18
International AIDS Candlelight Memorial



19
National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

JUNE

5
National HIV/AIDS
Long-term Survivors
Awareness Day



8
National Caribbean American
HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

27
National HIV
Testing Day



JULY

21
Zero HIV Stigma Day



SEPTEMBER

18
National
HIV/AIDS
and Aging
Awareness
Day



27
National
Gay Men's
HIV/AIDS
Awareness
Day



OCTOBER

4
National DIS Awareness
Day



15
National Latinx AIDS
Awareness Day

23
National Day of
Action to End
Violence Against
Women with HIV

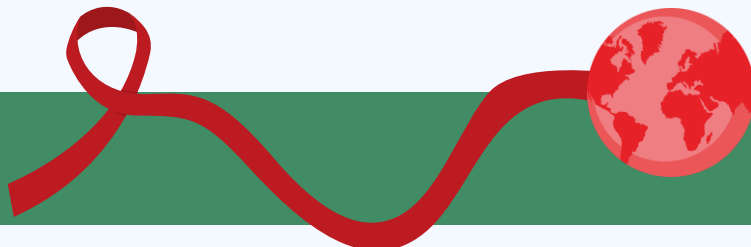


NOVEMBER

20
Transgender Day of Remembrance

DECEMBER

1
World AIDS Day



Appendix

About This Toolkit

- [News Platform Fact Sheet](#) (Pew Research Center)

Health Literacy and Plain Language

- [Develop and Test Materials](#) (CDC)
- [Health Literacy](#) (CDC)
- [Health Literacy Training](#) (CDC)
- [Health Literacy and Plain Language Training](#) (CDC)
- [We Heart Health Literacy](#) (CommunicateHealth)
- [Plain Language Materials and Resources](#) (CDC)
- [Plain Language for Public Health](#) (Public Health Communications Collaborative)
- [Checklist for Plain Language](#) (Plainlanguage.gov)

Numeracy and Avoiding Stigma

- [Numeracy](#) (CDC)
- [Numeracy: Health Literacy and Clear Communication for Numbers and Statistics](#) (CDC)
- [Epi 101: The Basics of Epidemiology](#) (MDHHS)
- [Best Practices for Infographics in Public Health](#) (CDC)
- [Ways to Stop HIV Stigma and Discrimination](#) (CDC)
- [Preferred Terms for Select Population Groups & Communities](#) (CDC)
- [Culture and Language](#) (CDC)
- [Resources for Professionals](#) (CommunicateHealth)

Style Guide and Branding

- [Branding Resource Guide For Health Departments](#) (ASTHO)
- [Contrast Checker](#) (WebAIM)
- [ADA Requirements: Effective Communication](#) (ADA.gov)
- [Communicating Effectively for People with Disabilities](#) (ADA.gov)
- [Accessible Social Media for Public Health](#) (Public Health Communications Collaborative)
- [Creating Digitally Accessible Materials for Public Health Campaigns](#) (CDC)

SHOARS

- [SHOARS BHSP Partner Registration Guide](#) (MDHHS)
- [STI/HIV Operations and Resource System \(SHOARS\)](#) (MDHHS)
- [HIV & STI Health Promotion Materials Available to Order Through SHOARS](#) (MDHHS)

Social Media and Creating Content

- [Effective Health Communication: Using Inclusive Language and Images](#) (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health)
- [Unsplash](#)
- [iStock](#)
- [Adobe Stock](#)
- [Social Media Toolkit for Health Departments](#) (ASTHO)

HIV and STI Social Media Content

- [Let's Stop HIV Together Social Media Toolkit](#) (CDC)
- [Greater Than HIV Videos, Digital Banners, Graphics](#) (Kaiser Family Foundation)
- [Awareness Days](#) (HIV.gov)
- [HIV Awareness Days](#) (CDC)
- [STI Communication Resources & Social Media](#) (CDC)
- [Doxy PEP Marketing Tools](#) (National Coalition of STD Directors)

BHSP Social Media Toolkits

- [MIPrEP MIChoice Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [Mahogany Blue Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [Stop Syphilis Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [Ending HIV Together Social Media Toolkit](#)

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) does not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of race, national origin, color, sex, disability, religion, age, height, weight, familial status, partisan considerations, or genetic information. Sex-based discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, and pregnancy.

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