



DSCYF

Department of Services for
Children, Youth & Their Families

Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

2025 Annual Report



Safe & healthy children,
resilient families,
strong communities.

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Wilmington, DE 19805-1195

A Word from the Secretary

Dear Colleagues, Community Partners, Neighbors and Delaware Residents,

I am pleased to share the Department of Services for Children, Youth and



Their Families' 2025 Annual Report. The accomplishments highlighted in these pages reflect the dedication of our employees, the strength of our partnerships, and our commitment to improving the lives of Delaware's children, youth, and families.

DSCYF employees work to protect children, strengthen families, support youth, and connect Delawareans with

services. Their professionalism, compassion, and commitment make this work possible. I also want to thank our community partners and service providers, whose collaboration is essential to helping us meet the needs of those we serve.

The accomplishments in this report are possible because of the dedication of our employees and the strength of our partnerships.

Throughout 2025, we remained focused on strengthening services while finding new ways to better support children and families. I appreciate Governor Matt Meyer, the General Assembly, and our stakeholders for their continued support as we work toward better outcomes for Delaware's children and families.

As we look ahead, I remain optimistic about what we can accomplish together. By continuing to invest in our workforce, strengthen partnerships, and focus on the needs of children and families, we will continue creating positive change across Delaware.

Thank you for your interest in our work and your support of DSCYF's mission.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve E. Yeatman".

Steve Yeatman
Secretary

Background

The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF), established in 1983 by the General Assembly of the State of Delaware, provides critical child welfare, behavioral health and juvenile justice services for Delaware's children. DSCYF, commonly referred to as the Delaware Children's Department, employs approximately 1,400 staff at 31 locations and serves an estimated 8,000 children through four divisions, including:

- Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS)
- Division of Family Services (DFS)
- Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS)
- Division of Management Support Services (DMSS)

DSCYF uses trauma-informed practices that recognize how varied personal experiences shape individuals and is committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment in all aspects of its operations, both within our workforce and in serving Delaware's children and families.



DSCYF
Department of Services for
Children, Youth & Their Families

VISION

Safe and healthy children, resilient families, strong communities.

MISSION

Engage families and communities to promote the safety and well-being of children through prevention, intervention, treatment and rehabilitative services.

VALUES

Serving Delaware children under the age of 18 and their families, DSCYF strives to support children and families in the community by way of our core values: Safety, Compassion, Respect, and Collaboration.

Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services

The [Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services](#) (DPBHS) provides a family-driven, youth-guided, trauma-informed prevention and behavioral system of care. In 2025, DPBHS advanced its mission by implementing initiatives to enhance prevention, early intervention, and treatment.

CARF Accreditation: Our Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services received a full three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services organizations. This recognition reflects the quality of care provided across several programs, including the John E. Stevenson Youth Center (JESYC), the Silver Lake Treatment Consortium (SLTC), and our treatment authorization unit, the Child and Family Care Coordination (CFCC) Teams.

CFCC functions similarly to an insurance authorization unit, but with a more family-centered approach. Every family enrolled in CFCC is connected with a dedicated case manager who helps them navigate mental health and substance use treatment systems.

John E. Stevenson Youth Center (JESYC): The John E. Stevenson Youth Center was dedicated on December 9, 2025. The center includes 10 crisis



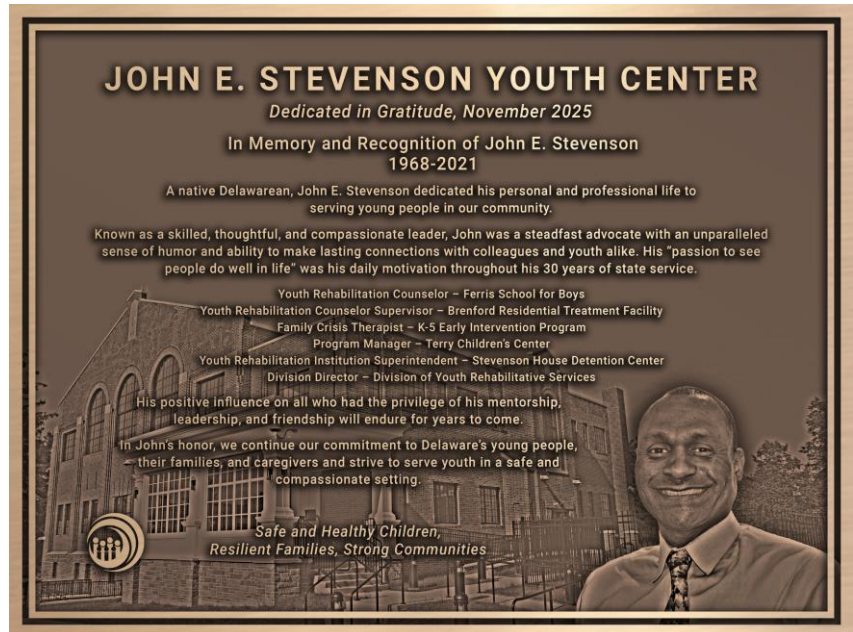
beds and six diagnostic beds for children under 18 and replaces an outdated program previously housed at the Terry Children's Center on the Department of Health and Social Services campus. Located in a fully renovated building on DSCYF's campus, the new center provides a modern, purpose-built space designed to better

meet the needs of vulnerable youth.

The renovation was made possible through federal funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act. Delaware acted quickly to leverage this opportunity, transforming the building into an investment in the well-being of children and families. The project reflects collaboration across state

agencies and a shared commitment to improving services while remaining fiscally responsible.

More than 150 people attended the dedication ceremony, including John E. Stevenson's family, friends, staff, community partners, and state leaders. The event honored Mr. Stevenson's legacy and recognized the partnerships that helped bring the project to completion. [View the dedication ceremony.](#)

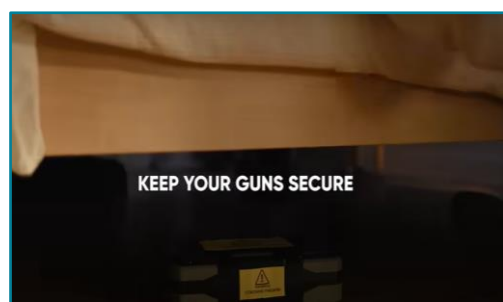


VIDEO Spotlight

As part of its prevention efforts, the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services developed two public awareness videos promoting safe firearm storage and the importance of keeping firearms securely stored, especially in homes with children. The videos were created to help educate families about simple steps they can take to reduce the risk of accidental injury and improve child safety.



[Watch: Safe Firearm Storage](#)



[Watch: Keep Your Guns Secure](#)

Division of Family Services

The [Division of Family Services](#) (DFS) promotes the safety and well-being of children and their families through prevention, protection, and permanency. DFS investigates child abuse, neglect, and dependency and offers treatment services, foster care, adoption, and independent living services. Over the past year, DFS has expanded its services and strengthened partnerships to enhance family stability, support reunification, and provide permanency for children.

Independent Living: One of the many bright spots this year was the story of a young man in foster care who achieved his goal of joining the United States Navy. After turning 18, he continued receiving support through the Division of Family Services and the Murphey School's Independent Living Program which helps young adults in foster care prepare for adulthood. With



DSCYF joined community partners in celebrating the Independent Living for Young Adults (ILYA) program's 20th anniversary, recognizing two decades of helping youth who have experienced foster care prepare for independent adulthood.

encouragement and guidance from his team, he completed Navy basic training, advanced training in Florida, and is now stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. One of the most meaningful moments came at his graduation from basic training, where he was joined by his younger brother, who is also in foster care.

His success reflects the impact of Delaware's Independent Living Program and the ongoing support available to young adults as they transition from foster care to adulthood. Learn more about [DSCYF's Independent Living Services](#).



The Heart Wall Christiana Mall was updated this year to help highlight our foster parent and adoptive family recruitment efforts.

Adoption & Permanency Efforts: In November, Delaware observed National Adoption Month by recognizing the families, professionals, and partners who help children find safe, loving, and permanent homes. Hosted by DFS and the Interagency Committee on Adoption (IACOA), Delaware's annual National Adoption Day celebration honored families who welcomed children through adoption and celebrated seven adoption finalizations held during the event.



Throughout 2025, 75 Delaware children found permanent families through adoption. The celebration highlighted the life-changing impact of adoption and Delaware's continued commitment to helping children achieve permanency while supporting families throughout their adoption journey.

TEAM Spotlight

Administrator of Excellence Award

This year, the Delaware Association of School Librarians (DASL) presented its Administrator of Excellence Award to a team from DSCYF in recognition of their educational excellence and support of school libraries. Peggy Griffith, DSCYF Administrative Librarian, presented the award on behalf of DASL to the following individuals: Dr. Dwight BoNey, Supervisor of Education; Kimeer Williams, Principal; Lorenzo Hopkins, Superintendent; Daniel Woodley, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Stephen Benscoter, Principal; Tanya Banks, Superintendent; Ashley Morse, Assistant Superintendent; Erica Foster-Holt, Principal; Ian Smith, Superintendent.



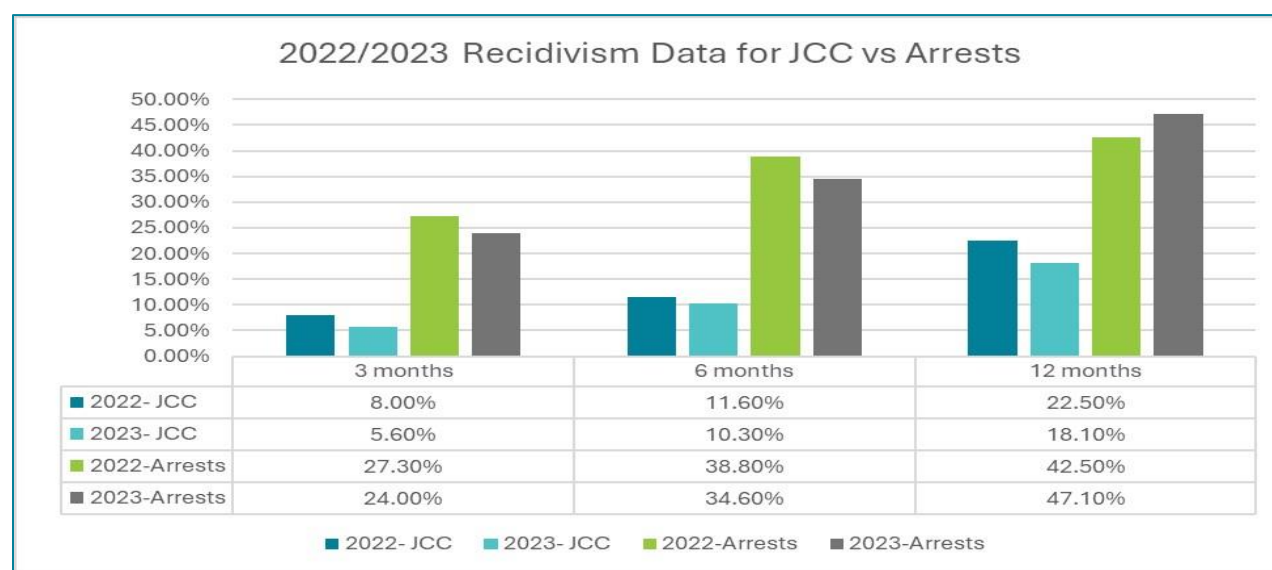
Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services

The [Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services](#) (DYRS) continues to expand its impact through key initiatives to reduce recidivism, enhance public safety, and promote positive youth outcomes.

DYRS has made meaningful strides in empowering youth and families through innovative programs that offer guidance, education and support.

Juvenile Civil Citation Program: The Juvenile Civil Citation (JCC) Program offers a statewide alternative to formal arrest and criminal prosecution for youth under 18 who commit eligible misdemeanor offenses. Instead of entering the juvenile justice system, participating youth complete an assessment, fulfill community service requirements, and complete a community impact statement designed to promote accountability and connect them with appropriate supports.

Data from Delaware's Statistical Analysis Center shows the program is making a difference. Youth tracked for 12 months following a JCC referral or eligible arrest showed that, in both 2022 and 2023, youth who were arrested instead of referred to JCC recidivated at nearly twice the rate of those who participated in the program. These results highlight the positive impact of early intervention and community-based alternatives for youth.



Source: Delaware Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), Juvenile Civil Citation Recidivism Data, 2022–2023.

ACA Accreditation: This year, the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services once again earned full accreditation from the American Correctional Association and its Commission on Accreditation for Corrections. YRS has voluntarily participated in this rigorous review process since the new Ferris School opened in 1997 and has successfully maintained accreditation every three years since first earning it just before 2000.



This recognition reflects the dedication of staff across Ferris School, the New Castle County Detention Center, and the Stevenson House Detention Center, all of which underwent extensive reviews that included facility walkthroughs, staff interviews, and detailed examinations of everything from case management and medical records to education services and overall health and safety practices.

Maintaining accreditation reflects YRS's ongoing commitment to providing safe, high-quality services for youth while meeting nationally recognized standards for facility operations and care.

Ferris School Youth Win National CIYJ Award – Again! For the seventh year in a row, youth from Ferris School earned top recognition in the Center for Improving Youth Justice (CIYJ) Kids Got Talent contest. Youth created a music video using Ferris School's in-house recording studio to showcase their talent and creativity. The award was presented to the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services at CIYJ's annual training and awards banquet in Boston. [Read the full CIYJ announcement.](#)

GRADUATE **Celebrating Our Graduates**

Spotlight Twelve youth in our juvenile justice system celebrated an important achievement in 2025 by earning their high school diplomas at Ferris School, Stevenson House, and the New Castle County Detention Center.



Operational Updates: In 2025, DSCYF introduced Operational Updates, a new video series developed in response to employee feedback requesting more regular and transparent communication. The series gives staff a behind-the-scenes look at key departmental processes, priorities, and initiatives, helping connect their day-to-day work to the Department's broader mission. The first video, released in October, focused on the state budget process, followed by a December update highlighting the Department's new Leadership Institute. Future topics will continue to be shaped by employee feedback.



Division of Management Support Services

The [Division of Management Support Services](#) (DMSS) provides critical support functions to ensure services to employees and clients are delivered efficiently and effectively. Throughout 2025, DMSS implemented key initiatives to enhance efficiency, security, and accessibility in service delivery.

Leadership Institute: In 2025, DSCYF launched the Leadership Institute, a department-wide training program designed to strengthen leadership skills

and support supervisors in building engaged, high-performing teams. The program was developed in response to employee feedback from the 2023 and 2025 Employee Satisfaction Surveys, stay interviews, and the Department's new Supervisor Competencies.

The Leadership Institute equips supervisors with the knowledge and practical skills needed to lead in a trauma-informed, equitable, and supportive workplace. Training focuses on leadership and management, communication, professional



development, and organizational skills, while emphasizing reflective supervision and continuous learning.

The Leadership Institute represents an investment in DSCYF's workforce and reinforces the Department's commitment to developing confident leaders who support employees, strengthen teams, and improve outcomes for the children, youth, and families we serve.

Cleveland White Building Restoration: Throughout 2025, construction continued on the renovation of the Cleveland White building, a project designed to create a modern, collaborative, and cost-effective workspace on the DSCYF Main Campus. Once complete, the renovated building will house more than 70 employees from the Divisions of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services and Management Support Services, allowing the Department to consolidate operations from multiple office locations into a single campus.



The renovation will enable DSCYF to relocate all remaining employees from Concord Plaza, along with the Criminal History Unit currently housed in the Administration Building. Throughout the project, staff from multiple divisions worked together to coordinate planning and prepare for one of the Department's largest office relocations in recent years.



The Cleveland White renovation represents an investment in DSCYF's workforce by creating workspaces that better support collaboration, efficiency, and service delivery while making more effective use of existing state resources.

Trauma-Informed Care

In 2025, the Trauma-Informed Care Committee (TICC) continued to strengthen a trauma-informed culture across the Department, with a focus on practical application in our daily work. Monthly meetings created space for learning, reflection, and shared problem-solving, helping staff connect trauma-informed principles to real-world practice. A key milestone was the launch of the Values in Practice Monthly Digest, a collaborative internal resource that provides information on trauma, wellness, and self-care, along with tools to support serving Delaware's diverse communities and awareness of upcoming training and resources.



Organizational Values and Service Enhancement Committee: TICC also partnered with the Organizational Values and Service Enhancement



Committee to host an Amplifying Voices session during Mental Health Awareness Month. This session centered lived experiences at the intersection of mental health and disabilities, reinforcing the importance of listening, learning, and incorporating diverse perspectives into how we design and deliver services. Workplace wellness remained a priority, with initiatives including a 30-day wellness challenge, a movement challenge, and a

collaborative gardening initiative—reinforcing the connection between staff well-being and quality service delivery.

Take Care Delaware: In addition, Take Care Delaware continued to expand its reach during the 2024–2025 academic year. Four additional school districts and three law enforcement agencies joined as partners, further strengthening cross-system collaboration. Approximately 4,800 notifications were sent to schools in response to nearly 3,000 incidents, helping to promote compassionate, trauma-informed responses for children who may have experienced trauma at home or in their communities.

Challenges/Improvement Areas

DSCYF acknowledges challenges, including staffing shortages, retirement eligibility, and the need for continuous innovative recruitment and retention efforts.

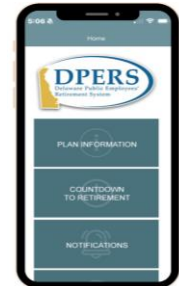
Recruitment/Retention: Recruiting and retaining a strong workforce remained a priority in 2025. Building on the planning completed in 2024, DSCYF launched a recruitment campaign to attract qualified candidates for a variety of positions. The campaign used social media, digital advertising, video, streaming audio, and online job postings to highlight career opportunities at DSCYF and encourage prospective candidates to explore careers with the Department.



Hard-to-Fill Positions: DSCYF continued to focus on filling critical positions across the Department in 2025. The following classifications remained designated as hard-to-fill positions.

Classification	Average Vacancy Rate CY25
Family Service Specialist Series (DFS)	25%
Youth Care Specialist Series (DYRS)	16%
Youth Care Specialist Series (DPBHS)	18%
Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Specialist Series (DYRS)	48.5%
Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Specialist Series (DPBHS)	57.7%
Teacher (DMSS)	18%

Retirement Eligibility: Within five years of December 31, 2025, 317 employees (29%) are projected to be eligible for retirement. This number includes employees eligible to retire with full and reduced pensions based on credible service and age criteria. Of these, 87 DSCYF employees (8%) are eligible to retire immediately. DSCYF's strategic plan includes continuous improvement practices and dedicated resources to support ongoing cross-training, knowledge transfer, and succession management activities to guide the Department's succession planning.



Continuous Quality Improvement Collaborative (CQI) Highlights

The Continuous Quality Improvement Collaborative (CQIC) continued to advance a culture of learning, accountability, and continuous improvement. CQIC focused on strengthening both the tools and skills needed to support effective practice and informed decision-making. A key area of focus was building staff capacity through targeted training and practical resources. CQIC launched the **Tips, Tricks, & Helpful Hints** training series and developed a companion training series to support use of the **Team Meeting Flipbook**, helping teams apply consistent, high-quality practices in their day-to-day work. In addition, CQIC developed **Change Management Training** for Department leadership, reinforcing our ability to lead and sustain meaningful change. CQIC's internal capacity also grew, with three committee members advancing their skills through the Process and Project Leadership training and three new members joining the committee after completing the Continuous Improvement Practitioner Program, bringing DSCYF's total GEAR Field Team membership to 12.

CQIC also supported data-informed improvement efforts. The team facilitated the bi-annual **Employee Satisfaction Survey** and report, providing valuable insights into staff experience and organizational culture. Updates were made to the Service Description field within the Contracted Services Dashboard to improve clarity, consistency, and usability of information that supports decision-making.

Finally, CQIC continued to strengthen how we view and assess our work by incorporating a multi-generational lens into **System of Care** review tools,

ensuring our approaches remain responsive to the diverse needs of children, families, and communities.

Overall, CQIC's work in 2025 reflects a continued commitment to equipping staff, improving systems, and embedding continuous quality improvement into everyday practice.

In addition to the work of CQIC, DSCYF continued its twice annual System of Care Comprehensive Review. During the first half of 2025, the CQI Team completed a review of 62 cross-divisional cases and gathered feedback to evaluate how the Department is serving children and families. The findings identified many strengths, highlighted opportunities for improvement, and help guide ongoing efforts to strengthen collaboration, improve services, and enhance outcomes.

Training

Learning and professional growth continued to be a focus in 2025. DSCYF employees complete 28 hours of required training each calendar year, with opportunities that strengthen their skills, support career development, and deepen their understanding of trauma-informed practice and the lived experiences of the children, youth, and families they serve.



Strategic Plan Progress

In 2025, DSCYF completed year four of its five-year [Strategic Plan](#), making continued progress across all four priority goals.

Goal 1: Utilize a best practice framework that emphasizes child and family engagement and empowerment.

DSCYF developed and delivered training to support the Family Team Meeting Flipbook, helping staff strengthen consistency and quality in family engagement. The Department also incorporated a multi-generational lens into System of Care Reviews to better support whole-family engagement and assessment.

Goal 2: Improve integration of practice and infrastructure across divisions.



The Department continued improving access to information and strengthening collaboration across divisions by maintaining the Contracted Services Dashboard and expanding Lunch and Learn sessions. DSCYF also continued publishing its employee newsletter to share news, celebrate accomplishments, and keep staff informed.

Goal 3: Expand and institutionalize data-driven decision making.

A major milestone was the rollout of required Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) training for all employees. The training helps build a shared understanding of CQI principles and supports a department-wide focus on continuous improvement.

Goal 4: Ensure a qualified, competent, and supported workforce.

Supervisor competencies were integrated into the performance planning and review process, helping define expectations and support leadership development. The Department also developed a Leadership Institute with ongoing mentoring that will launch in 2026.

MEDIA Spotlight

DSCYF in the News

Throughout 2025, news coverage helped share the stories of DSCYF's programs, employees, and the children, youth, and families we serve.

Stories encouraged Delawareans to consider [becoming foster parents](#), explained the [adoption process](#), recognized [National Adoption Month](#), and highlighted opportunities available to youth in foster care, including the [state's tuition waiver program](#) for higher education.

Additional coverage featured the [Independent Living for Young Adults \(ILYA\) program](#), [Foster Care Month](#), the statewide [drug prevention poster contest](#), and national recognition for our [Ferris School Librarian](#). Public Service Recognition Week also provided an opportunity to [recognize DSCYF employees](#) for their outstanding service and dedication, celebrating both state-level and departmental award recipients.

Summary

Throughout 2025, DSCYF continued working to protect children, strengthen families, support youth, and improve outcomes for Delaware's children, youth, and families.

The Department celebrated several important milestones during the year, including the dedication of the new John E. Stevenson Youth Center and full three-year accreditations for both the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services and the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services. The Division of Family Services also helped 75 children achieve permanency through adoption and continued supporting young adults as they prepared for adulthood through the Independent Living Program.

DSCYF also invested in its workforce by launching the Leadership Institute, introducing Operational Updates to strengthen communication with employees, expanding Continuous Quality Improvement training, and making progress on year four of its five-year strategic plan. A department-wide recruitment campaign also helped promote career opportunities and attract qualified candidates for positions across the agency.

Throughout the year, DSCYF strengthened partnerships, expanded trauma-informed practices, and continued improving the way services are delivered. Together, these accomplishments reflect DSCYF's commitment to protecting children, strengthening families, and supporting youth across Delaware.



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Delaware's Kids.



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kids.delaware.gov/employment



DSCYF
Department of Services for
Children, Youth & Their Families



Thank You

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