

# **CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS: FINDINGS FROM AN EVALUATION OF UPSTREAM KELOWNA**

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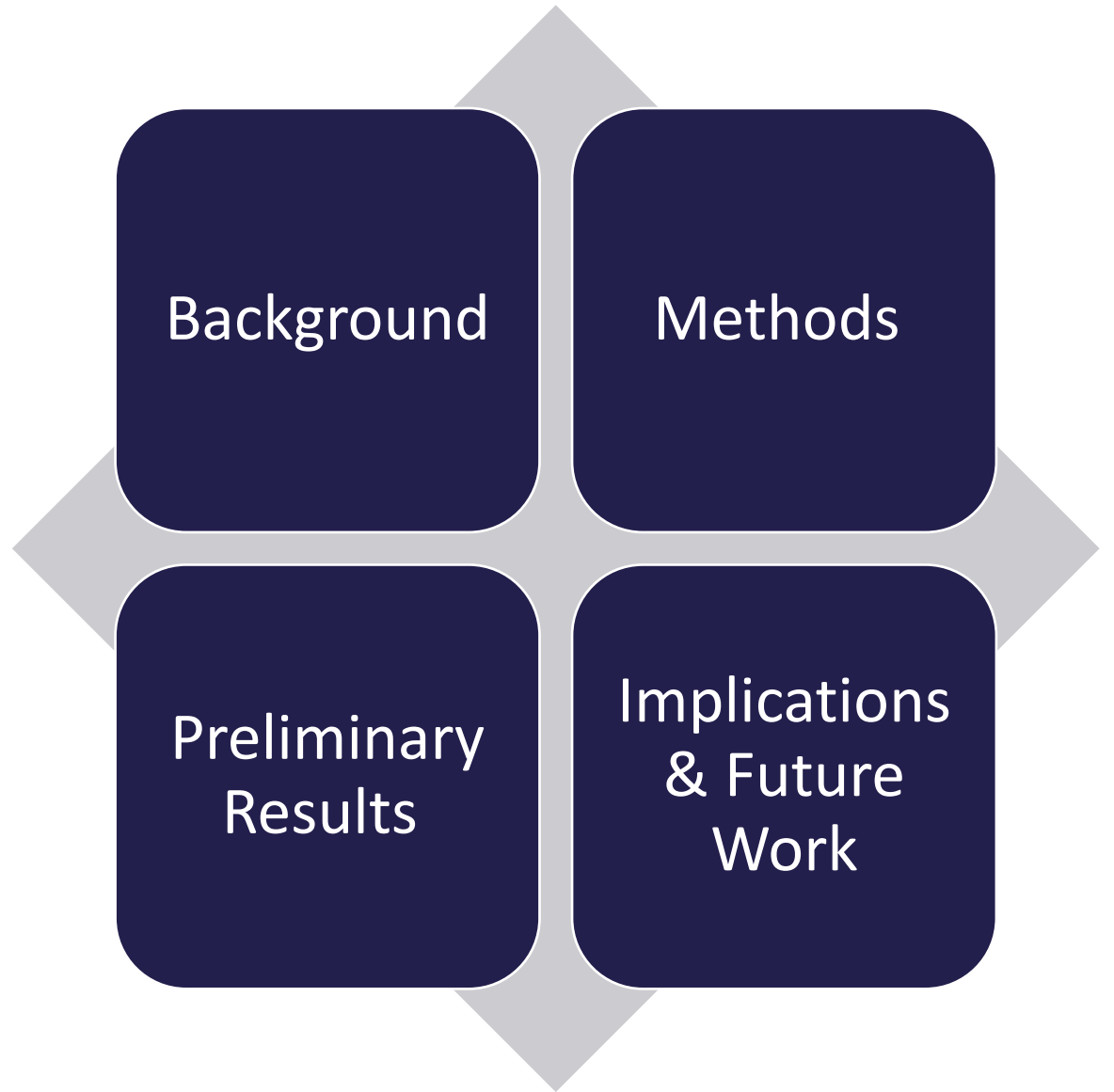
Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Conference 2022



# Land Acknowledgement

- *We wish to acknowledge this land on which we work and live. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and learn on this land.*
- *We also wish to acknowledge the racist and colonialist history of housing across Canada and how this has influenced knowledge, experiences, and outcomes of individuals of varying social identities and locations.*

# Agenda

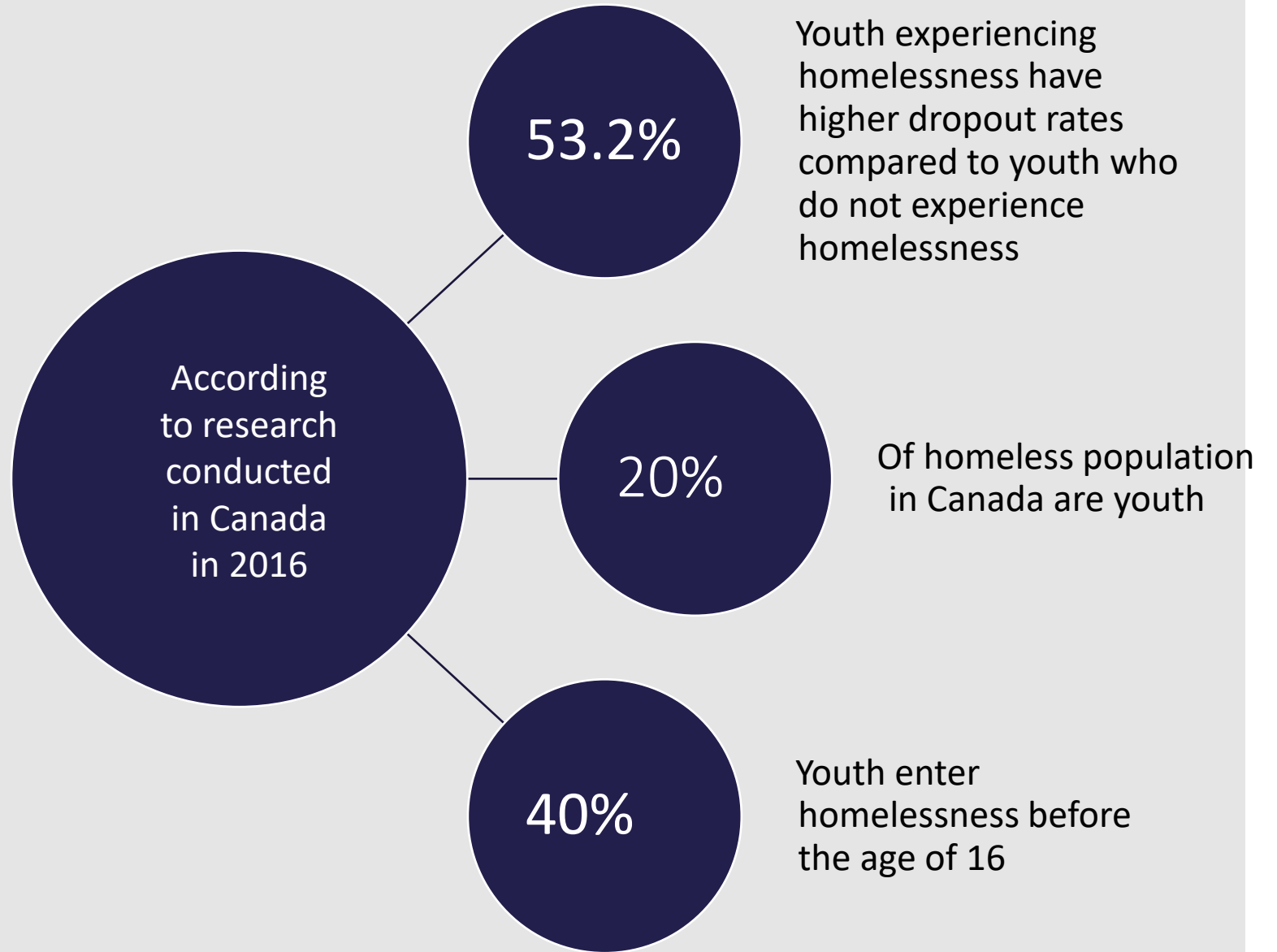


# Objective

Describe	Describe the role of Upstream in preventing youth homelessness.
Highlight	Highlight findings from the first-year outcome evaluation of Upstream in British Columbia and Nova Scotia.
Outline	Outline implementation implications and next steps of Upstream in Canada.



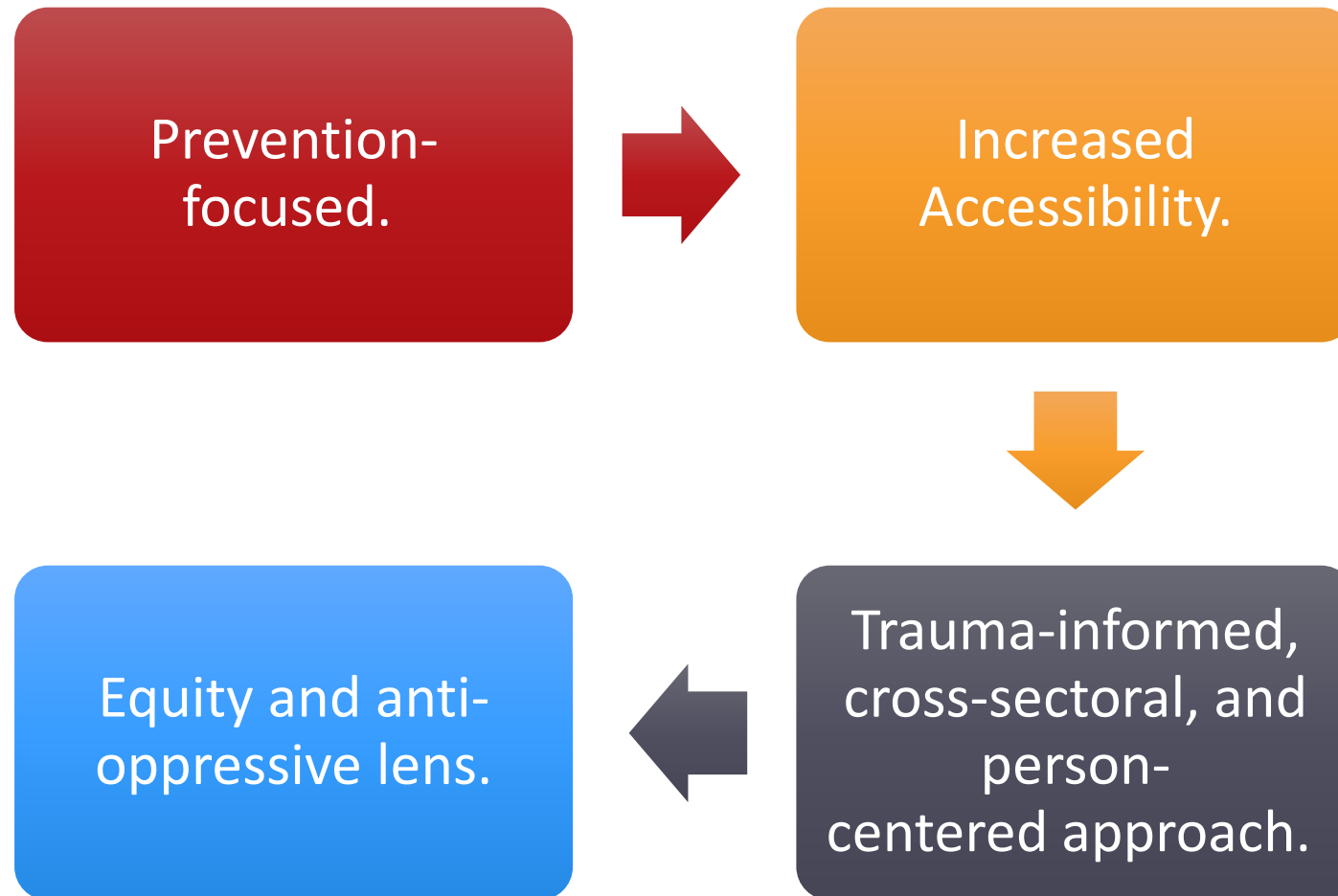
# Youth Experiencing Homelessness



# Challenges Addressing Youth Homelessness

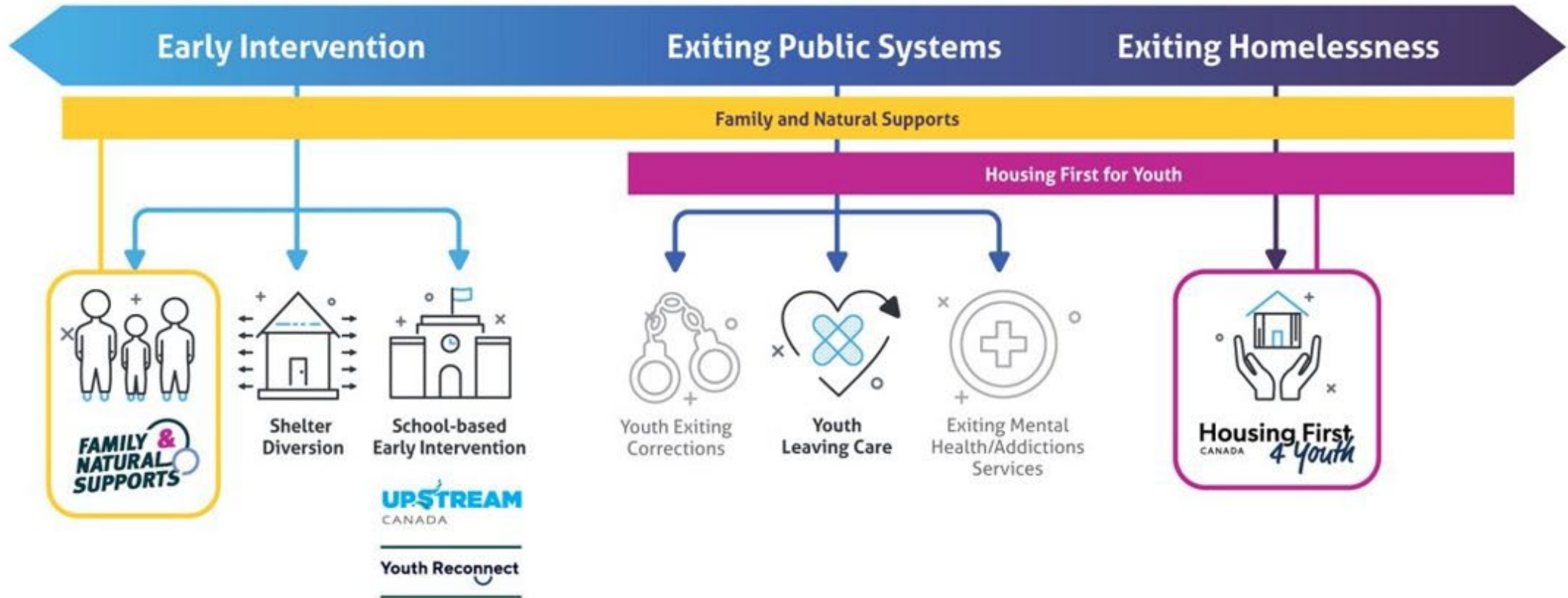
- Multi-dimensional experiences of homelessness for youth.
- A lack of awareness and acceptance of the issue among varying jurisdictions.
- Siloed nature of health and social support systems.
- Intervention vs prevention mainstream solutions.

# Addressing Youth Homelessness



# Preventing Youth Homelessness

## What you can do in *your* community





# Upstream Canada

Prevention-focused intervention aimed at reducing youth homelessness.

Focused on providing support to youth aged 12-18 at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness through schools.

Adapted from the Geelong Project in Australia which has reduced youth homelessness by 40% three years post implementation.



Students complete a standardized assessment;



Based on the results, students who are flagged for potential risk have the opportunity to participate in validation interviews with case managers;



Once needs are determined, a collaboratively developed care plan is established and students are connected to supports.

# What Was Done

## Community Engagement

- Participatory research and implementation plan with St. John's and Kelowna.
- Co-designed and adapted core components of Upstream.

## Outcome Evaluation

- Spoke with 10 implementers and 5 students across sites.
- Purposive sampling.
- Thematic analysis.

# Overview of Findings

## Benefits of Upstream:

- Collaborative and person-centred approach.
- Interdisciplinary approach to support.

## Challenges with Upstream:

- Housing related language used in program.
- Family buy-in.
- One-time Assessment.

## Recommendations for the Future of Upstream

- Integrating families into Upstream process.
- Addressing system-level causes of homelessness and housing precarity.

## Benefits of Upstream: Student

*“Like, I connected with her [Upstream Implementer] really well. And everything, I said like, **she's always listening.** And it just felt like a really safe place. **And I was able to be like, really vulnerable. And let out some emotions and feelings and things that I really haven't told anyone.** And I knew that it was going to be all confidential and I wasn't going to be scared to say anything. Like I was just always open and honest” (Student 1, 2022).*



## Benefits of Upstream: Implementer

"It is really nice to know that there is support for me [...]. You have no idea, as the [school position], how many times I wear the counselor hat. **It is really nice to know that we have trained people supporting us.** The school system does provide us some counseling support rate. But it's not enough. It's absolutely not enough. So, what has changed since after the pilot and since Upstream started working with students is to **know that there is a framework, which is closely working with us to support these kids**" (*Implementer 1, 2022*).



## Challenges of Upstream: Implementer

“What we've realized is, this is a **one-time assessment in an everyday reality**. It's like, you know, how we talk about assessment for learning, those aren't good judges of the situation. When we assess learning, we assess it over the period of time. It's observation, that's connection, that's assignments. And here, we are trying to, you know, look at the social emotional situation and the need through one, one-time Upstream assessment, **people answer differently, it's the mindset of that day, how they are feeling that will affect the responses**”  
*(Implementer 2, 2022).*



## Challenges of Upstream: Implementer

"You know, I think all organizations have had issues with recruitment, having enough people and a huge caseload. [...] **So sometimes we run into that issue where the will is there, but people aren't, there is not enough support**"  
*(Implementer 4, 2022).*





## Recommendations for Upstream: Implementer

*"If we really want to make change and best support the young people that we're working with, **we really need to kind of dive into the family work and support the whole unit**" (Implementer 5, 2022).*



## Recommendations for Upstream: Implementer

“We now have the opportunity to look at **what does it mean to build resilience**. I just finished my [organizations] annual report. I was quite shocked when I put all of the services into percentages, **at the bottom** were things like employment support, income assistance, housing support ” (*Implementer 6, 2022*).



# Conclusions



FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDED  
ON THE ROLE OF UPSTREAM  
IN DIFFERENT  
JURISDICTIONS AND  
AMONG YOUTH OF VARYING  
IDENTITIES.



UPSTREAM HAS  
UNDERScoreD THE  
IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH  
AND PRACTICE  
COLLABORATION.



FINDINGS PROVIDE A  
FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE  
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS  
PREVENTION INITIATIVES.



Thank you!

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