

Parental Guide to Autism and ABA

in Arizona

DEPS

**Developmental & Educational
Psychological Services**

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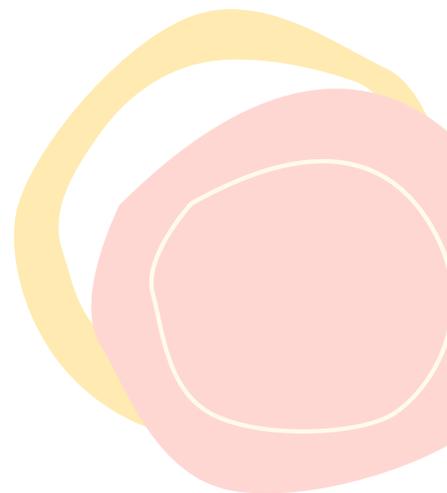
DEPS Autism

We created this guide to help parents and caregivers navigate resources in Arizona and learn more about autism. This guide is not comprehensive and we will do our best to keep it up to date.

At DEPS Autism, we are committed to providing high quality intervention services for children with autism. We understand that early detection of autism and early intervention are key factors to providing children and their families with the best outcomes.

We believe in early intervention and the wait and see approach is not one that we practice. Currently in Arizona, children on average are being diagnosed at age 4 years and 8 months, when autism can be reliably diagnosed as early as 18 months. Early detection can lead to increase services and better outcomes for these children. There are multiple screening tools available to help determine if an autism assessment is needed.

If an autism assessment has been determined to be needed, we have a psychologist that can provide diagnostic testings. At DEPS Autism we provide autism diagnostic testing using the ADOS-2. We recommend getting an autism assessment completed by a provider that accepts your insurance to help decrease the costs. For diagnostic testing, we accept major insurance plans including AHCCCS.



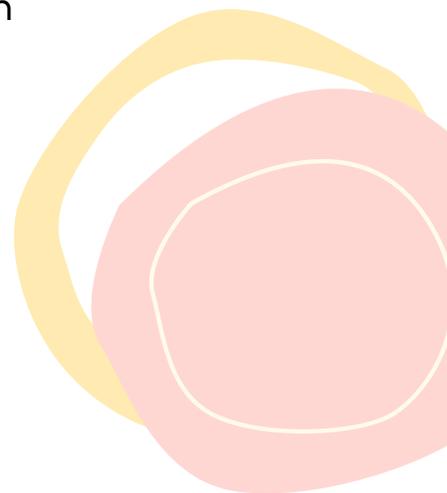
Are you concerned with autism?

It is important to track milestones to make sure that your child is developing as expected. Most of the time, this is done under the guidance of your child's pediatrician. If you have any concerns with milestones, it is important to bring it up to the pediatrician as well as begin your own research on seeking additional referrals.

Early intervention is key in making sure that children are developing as expected and decreasing the need for additional interventions as children are older.

What is autism?

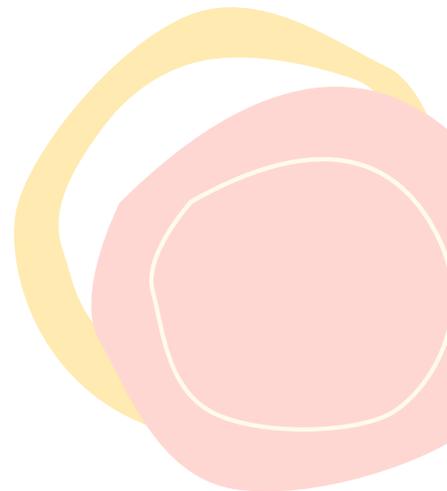
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurobiological developmental disability that is present before the age of 3 years.
- Autism impacts the development of the brain in the areas of social interaction, communication skills, and the individual may have a restricted range of interests or repetitive behaviors.
- Each individual with ASD has their own set of challenges and areas of difficulty.
- Symptoms vary from person to person and no two individuals with ASD are the same.
- There is no cure for autism. However, early intervention and treatment can lead to significant improvements in development.



Early signs of autism

- Speech delay or no speech
- Repetitive behaviors (flapping, rocking, spinning, etc.)
- Little use of gestures like pointing
- Lack of joint attention
- Repetitive and rigid play
- Difficulties with transitions
- Not responding consistently to name
- Echolalic speech
- Inability to understand and follow directions
- Decrease interest in others including children and adults
- Limited and differences in eye gaze
- Sleep disturbances
- Regression of skills
- Hypersensitivity to lights, smells, tastes, sounds, and textures
- Resistance to minor changes in routine or environment

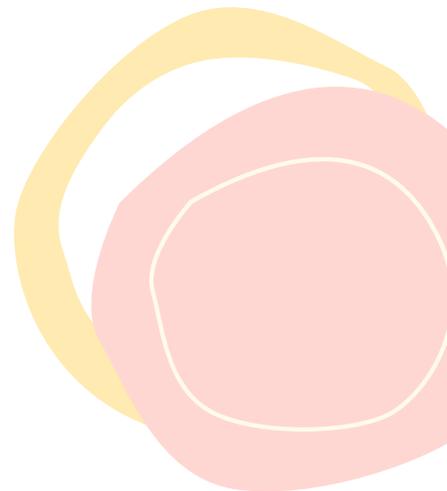
If you are unsure if your child needs an autism assessment, we can provide a free screening. Contact us at info@depsautism.com.



Autism Diagnostic Testing

Our multidisciplinary approach to autism intervention integrates expertise and experience from several different and related professional disciplines. Our team of diagnosticians includes licensed and certified psychologists, educational specialists and pediatric specialists who focus solely on developmental and autism assessments. In order to diagnose autism, we use the ADOS-2. The ADOS-2 will be completed with a licensed clinician. The assessment is play based to keep children engaged. Specific toys are used to meet standards outlined by the standardize testing.

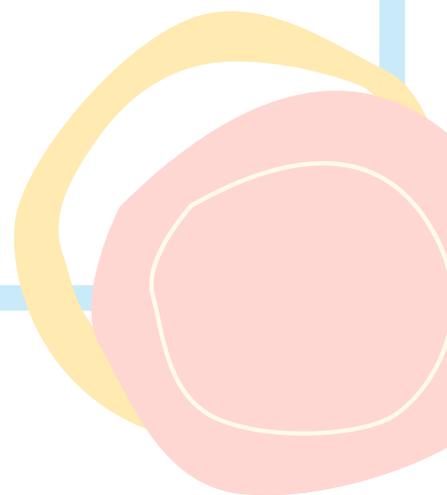
Once diagnosed, children can move over to our Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy team, which consists of licensed Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT) who specialize in the skill development of children with Autism.



When your child gets an autism diagnosis...

- Take time to sit down and process the information you were given. Processing your emotions can take more than one sit down. It is alright to be emotional and to have your emotions and feelings about the diagnosis change over time.
- Create a list of additional questions you may have and contact the provider who gave the diagnosis.
- Start to organize the documents and information you were given. Review any documents provided and start to plan your next steps.
- Review the services and interventions you have in place for your child. If you feel like additional intervention is needed, look at the information given to see if there are any recommendations.

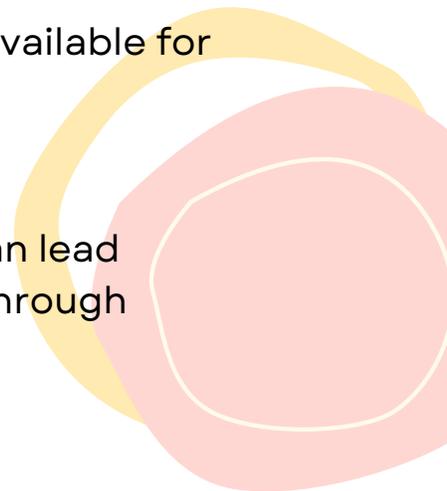
- Look into local support groups based on your preference. This can be done through social media groups, subscribing to email lists, contacting your friends to see if they have any resources. You are not alone in this and many people have been through this process before.
- Do research on ABA therapy. There is a lot of information and experiences with ABA out there. Complete a thorough research to determine if this is the right fit for your family. Currently, ABA is the gold standard in providing the best and effective intervention for children with autism.



How to get started with services

If your child is under age 3:

- Apply for Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP)
<https://azeip.azdes.gov/AzEIP/AzeipRef/Forms/Categories.aspx>
- Apply for the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
<https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/dl/DDD-2069A.pdf?time=1649698071134>
 - AzEIP is needed to access state services offered by the Division of Developmental Disabilities.
 - Once your child becomes eligible for AzEIP, you will be assigned a service coordinator who will provide you with a DDD application to complete and sign. The service coordinator will take the signed document, your documentation of the diagnosis, and submit it on your behalf.
- Apply for Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS)
 - Your AzEIP service coordinator will apply for you. The application will be sent to you to be signed. Your service coordinator will submit the application and supporting documentation to ALTCS for you. You will receive a phone call from ALTCS to start the process in the new few weeks.
- If you already have AzEIP services, contact your service coordinator to make sure your child is eligible for DDD. Let your service coordinator know of the diagnosis and provide the documentation of it when you get your report. Ask your service coordinator to apply for DDD and ALTCS as applicable.
- Contact your insurance to see what coverages are available for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).
- Contact local ABA agencies to get on waiting lists.
- Once your child is 2 years 9 months, contact your local school district and request a screening. This can lead to an IEP being written and eligibility for preschool through the school district.



How to get started with services

If your child is older than age 3:

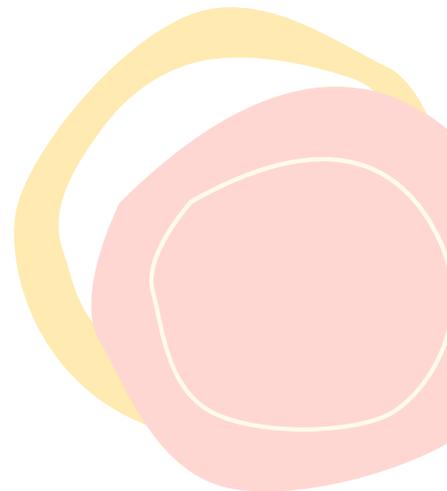
- Apply for the Division of Developmental Disabilities
<https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/di/DDD-2069A.pdf?time=1649698071134>
 - The application will list the documents you need to submit with your application.
 - DDD eligibility does not mean they will pay for therapy services. Your child must qualify for ALTCS as well.
 - Apply for Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS)
<https://www.azahcccs.gov/members/ALTCSlocations.html>
 - Fill out the application and submit it with the documentation of your child's diagnosis.
 - ALTCS eligibility along with DDD eligibility will pay for therapy and additional services like occupational therapy, speech therapy, physical therapy, ABA, habilitation, attendant care, nursing, etc (as applicable).
 - More information about ALTCS later on in this guide.
 - Contact your insurance plan to see if they cover ABA and additional therapy services like occupational (OT), speech (SPT), and physical therapy (PT).
 - Contact local ABA agencies to get on waiting lists.
 - Contact local therapy agencies that offer OT, SPT, and PT services to see if they have any openings.
 - Make sure you are accessing the resources offered by the local school district. Children can have an IEP written as young as age 3.
 - Look into the Empowerment Scholarship Account to learn more about flexible options available for services.
<https://www.azed.gov/esa>
- 

Applying for ALTCS

Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS) is a supplemental health plan to help pay for ABA services, therapy services (OT, PT, SPT), and additional services. This is to help subsidize the cost of raising children with developmental delays and/or disabilities. DDD eligibility is required in order to apply for ALTCS.

When applying for ALTCS, be prepared for a financial and medical interview.

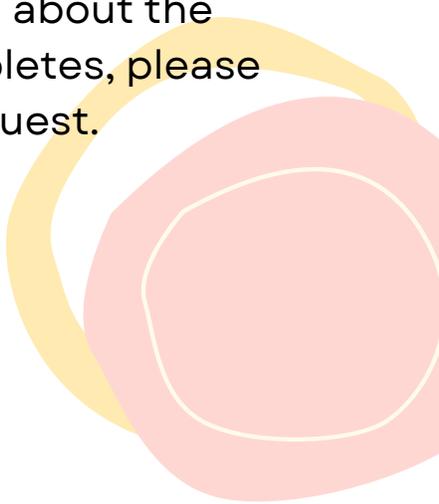
- Financial: This is based on your child's income, not yours or the families'. Your child cannot have more than \$2000.00 in his/her name.
- Medical: A diagnosis of Autism does not automatically mean that your child will qualify under medical. You will be contacted by a PAS assessor to schedule an appointment so that the assessor can ask additional questions in regards to your child's development. In addition to your responses, the PAS assessor will be contacting medical and educational professionals to get more information about your child in order to make their eligibility determination.



ALTCS Eligibility

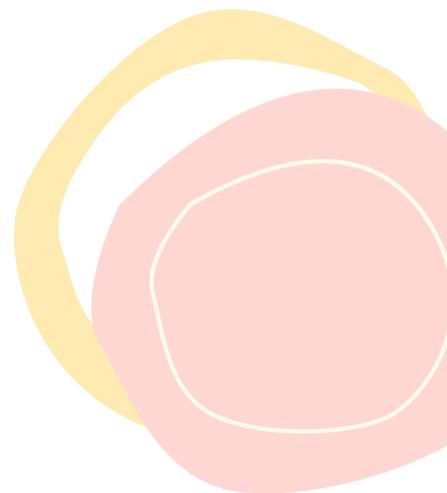
When communicating with ALTCS, make sure you always make note of the next appointment or phone call. Find out who you are talking to and get the contact information to call that person back if needed. ALTCS may schedule appointments via mail, so be sure to check your mail daily once you have applied. ALTCS may call from a blocked or unknown number. Once you apply, go ahead and pick up all phone calls if possible. ALTCS is known to deny eligibility due to lack of communication.

It may take several attempts in order to become ALTCS eligible. You may encounter a PAS assessor who tells you that in order to qualify for ALTCS, your child needs to be at risk of being institutionalized. The wording of this is intended to shock and discourage people from wanting their child to qualify for it. The medical eligibility is the hardest to qualify for. Be careful answering the questions. It is important to know that if your child is not doing something close to 100% of the time in a variety of settings, the skill is not yet there. Do not spend too much time explaining what your child does and does not do. The PAS assessor will always err on the side of caution and will mark that your child has a skill if it is noted anywhere in the documents provided to them or if you are providing conflicting information. If you would like more information about the ALTCS questionnaire that the PAS assessor completes, please email us at info@depsautism with the request.



Social Security Disability

Social Security Disability for children (SSI) is for children with physical disability, mental disability, and blindness to receive supplemental income in order to help alleviate the cost of having a child with a disability. It is very difficult to qualify for the program as it is income and resource based. Although ALTCS is based on the child's income, SSI is based on the family's income. Based on other families' experiences, SSI will most likely be declined the first time around. The process can be started online, but it requires an in person interview. The SSI has different worksheets and checklists to help parents prepare for the interview. All documents do not have to be gathered by the date of the interview, but try to get as many as possible. The SSI process can take 3-5 months. It may take several years to get SSI eligibility.

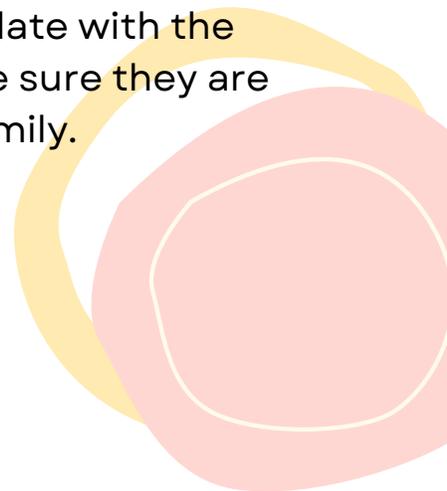


What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis is a science used to improve a variety of behaviors and to encourage new skills. It is most used with children with autism to help maximize their potential over their lifetime. ABA can be used to increase preferred behaviors, or it can be used to decreased non-preferred behaviors. As ABA is a science, there is a lot of research out there to support the use of it, especially for children with autism. It is important to remember that ABA needs to be individualized in order for it to be most effective for your child.

The number of hours of ABA will be determined once your child has had an assessment completed by our BCBA. ABA is an intensive program to help your child make the progress needed. Although it may seem like many hours, it will not feel that way for your child as everything is play based to elicit the best results from young children.

ABA is most effective when you have a high quality provider. At DEPS, your child will be working with therapists who are Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT) and are overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Your RBT will have gone through required trainings including classes, observations by a BCBA, and passing a written exam. The BCBA will have had a graduate education, a minimum of 2000 hours of fieldwork, and have sat for the board exam to become a certified BCBA. Continuing education is crucial to make sure that our providers are staying up to date with the latest research and expanding on their skills to make sure they are offering the best to your child and your family.



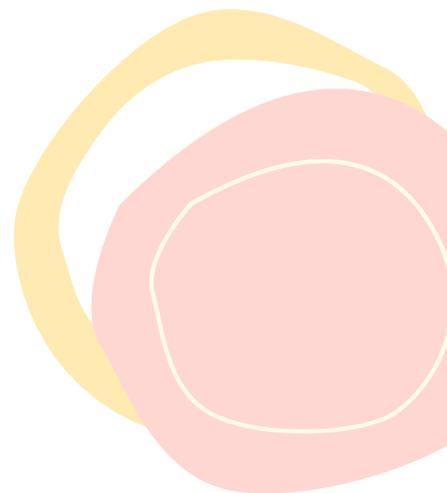
ABA at DEPS

We are focused on providing a safe, collaborative, and inclusive environment to create outcomes that last a lifetime. In order to individualize our treatment, we prioritize neurodiversity, self-advocacy, and team collaboration within our support model.

We strive to provide the best individualized intervention to all children that we serve. Our team takes their time to evaluate, assess, and get to know your child before creating a treatment plan. We take a holistic approach with emphasis on play based therapy. We stay up to date on the current research to provide the best care to your child and family. Data collection is important in ABA and we will continuously do so in order to analyze data to help with progress and program development for your child.

At DEPS, parent training and support is a priority. Treatment is most successful when parents are actively involved. When working with your child, we are working on small skillsets to build up to higher level skills. This takes time and we ask that you communicate with us any concerns you may have. We will always keep the line of communication open between you and your child's team.

We currently only accept Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance. We are working on contracting with other insurance providers.



Insurance Accepted

Autism Diagnostic Testing:

Ambetter

Blue Cross Blue Shield

Cigna

Banner

Compsych

Humana

Medicare

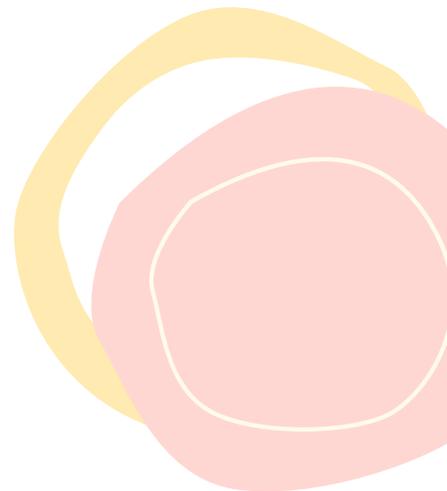
United Healthcare Community Plan (AHCCCS)

Mercycare (AHCCCS)

Banner University (AHCCCS)

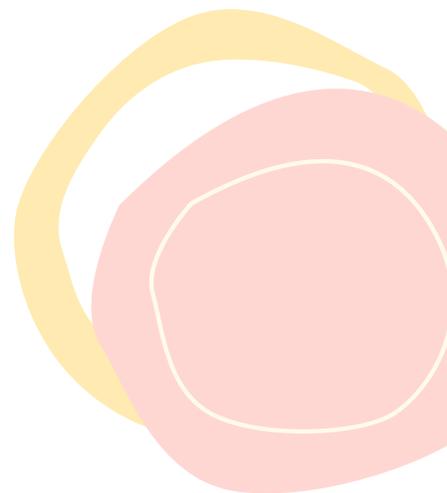
Applied Behavior Analysis:

Blue Cross Blue Shield



Insurance Terms to Know

- Deductible: The amount you owe for covered health care services before your health insurance or plan begins to pay.
- Copayment: An amount you pay as your share of the cost for a medical service or item, like a doctor's visit.
- Coinsurance: Your share of the cost for a covered health care service, usually calculated as a percentage (like 20%) of the allowed amount for the service.
- Premium: The amount you pay for your health insurance or plan each month.
- Network: The doctors, hospitals, and suppliers your health insurer has contracted with to deliver health care services to their members.



ABA Terms to Know

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

This is the science of behavior. Your BCBA has been trained extensively on different techniques within ABA to ensure your child gets the most effective treatment.

Behavior Analyst (BCBA)

This is your case supervisor and the person who will be doing assessments, treatment planning, training, and analyzing the impact of the treatment on a continual basis.

Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)

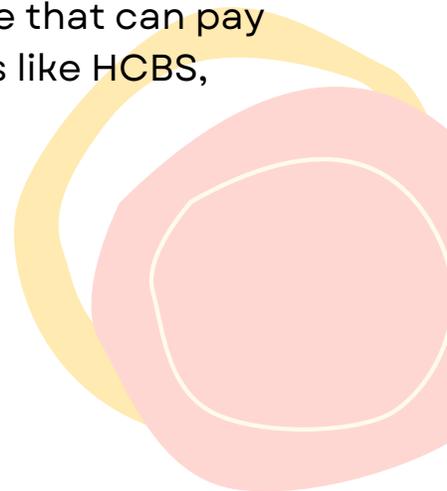
This is the person that will be working with your child daily and will be supervised by the BCBA. They are trained on each treatment technique and meet regularly with the BCBA outside of sessions for continued support and development.

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

This is the program that helps provide support coordination services through the life span for those with diagnosis of autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and cognitive disabilities. This is needed to apply for ALTCS.

Arizona Long Term Care System (ALTCS)

This is the supplemental insurance through the state that can pay for ABA, OT, PT, and SPT along with other services like HCBS, Attendant Care, etc.



Additional resources

Book recommendations:

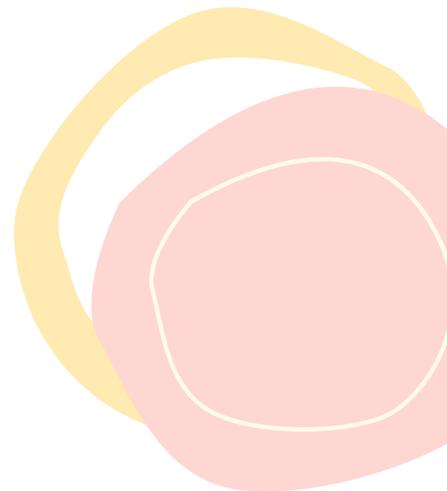
- [A Practical Guide to Autism; What Every Parent, Family Member, and Teacher Needs to Know](#) by Fred Volkmar
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder: What Every Parent Needs to Know](#) by Paul Carbone Alan Rosenblatt
- [Turn Autism Around: An Action Guide for Parents of Young Children with Early Signs of Autism](#) by Mary Barbera

Helpful Contacts:

- Southwest Autism Resource and Research Center: Jumpstart
602-606-9806
- Autism 101: 1-800-328-8476
- Raising Special Kids: 800-237-3007
- Birth to Five Hotline: 877-705-5437
- Southwest Human Development Center: 602-266-5976
- Greater Autism Society of Arizona: <https://phxautism.org>

Information about development:

- First Words Project- <https://firstwordsproject.com/>
- Pathways- <https://pathways.org/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>



A Word from Our Team

We thank you for taking time to read through our guide. One thing we can always count on in this field, is change. We strive to make sure that our information is up to date, but sometimes changes occur and we are not notified. If you find any errors in our guide, please contact us at info@depsautism.com to let us know. We hope that this guide has helped answer questions you may have as the system is convoluted and confusing. At DEPS, we want to empower parents and help them become better advocates for their children.

Sincerely,

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