

Georgia Infant-Toddler Court Project

August 3, 2023



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR
CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
integrating research, policy, and practice

Georgia
Health Policy
Center

Objective



To share information about a new and exciting program that will support communities and families to create safe stable nurturing home environments and communities.



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)

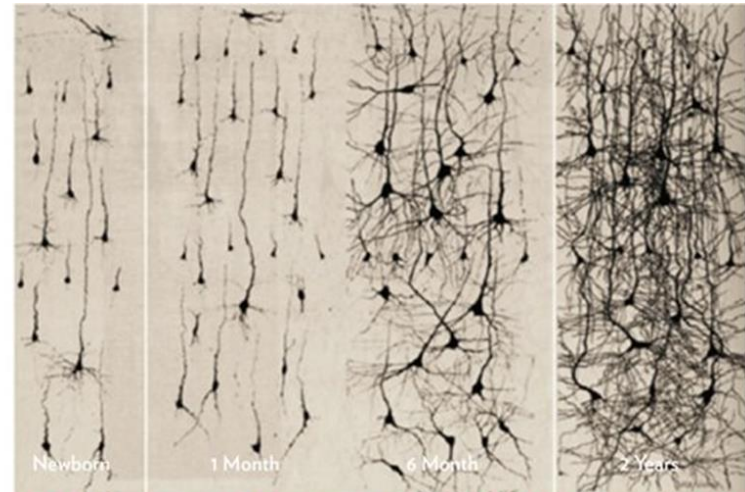
IECMH (social-emotional development) is *the developing capacity of young children to...*

- experience, manage, and express emotions;
- form close and secure relationships; and
- explore the environment and learn

...all in the context of family, community, and culture.

Early Brain Growth & IECMH

- The early years are an amazing **window of opportunity**
- **1 million new neural connections** are formed every second over the first few years of life
- Early life experiences set the **foundation for our brain architecture**
- *"...the connections that form early provide either a strong or weak foundation for the connections that form later."*



DRAMATIC GROWTH OF NEURONAL ARCHITECTURE FROM BIRTH TO 2 YRS

Source: "The Pediatrician's Role in Addressing Childhood Poverty", David Keller

A group of diverse children, including a girl on the left, a boy in the center, and a boy on the right, are smiling. The image is overlaid with a teal filter. The text is centered over the image.

Traumatic experiences can hinder development and may lead to mental health challenges in the future.

The Safe Babies approach is driven by a vision of prevention, where systems work together to strengthen the family, putting the need to protect and build safe, stable and nurturing early relationships at the center of child welfare decision-making.

HRSA Infant-Toddler Court Program & The Safe Babies Court Team Approach



Safe Babies
A Program of ZERO TO THREE

The Safe Babies Approach

Safe Babies, a program of ZERO TO THREE, meets the needs of babies and toddlers under court jurisdiction by implementing a team-based approach, rooted in the science of early childhood development, to ignite collective action across states and communities.

IMPACT: Safe Babies focuses on the urgent developmental needs of young children during all planning and decision-making to strengthen early relationships with parents and caregivers and to create safe, stable, and nurturing environments for babies and toddlers.

The Safe Babies approach is guided by five areas of focus, with the needs of babies and their parents at the center. The approach works concurrently, at both the **Child and Family Level** and the **State and Site Level**, to ensure healthy childhood development while impacting long-term capacity building.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Driving and sustaining best practices to foster reflection instead of reactivity, allowing the space for families and professionals to grow, adapt, and change based on effective data and evaluation

Interdisciplinary Collaborative and Proactive Teamwork

Ensuring families' individualized needs are addressed by promoting coordination across communities to find creative solutions and remove structural barriers that perpetuate discriminatory processes and inequities



Enhanced Oversight and Collaborative Problem-Solving

Enhancing judicial oversight with more frequent court hearings and engaging families as partners guided by respect, kindness, and compassion

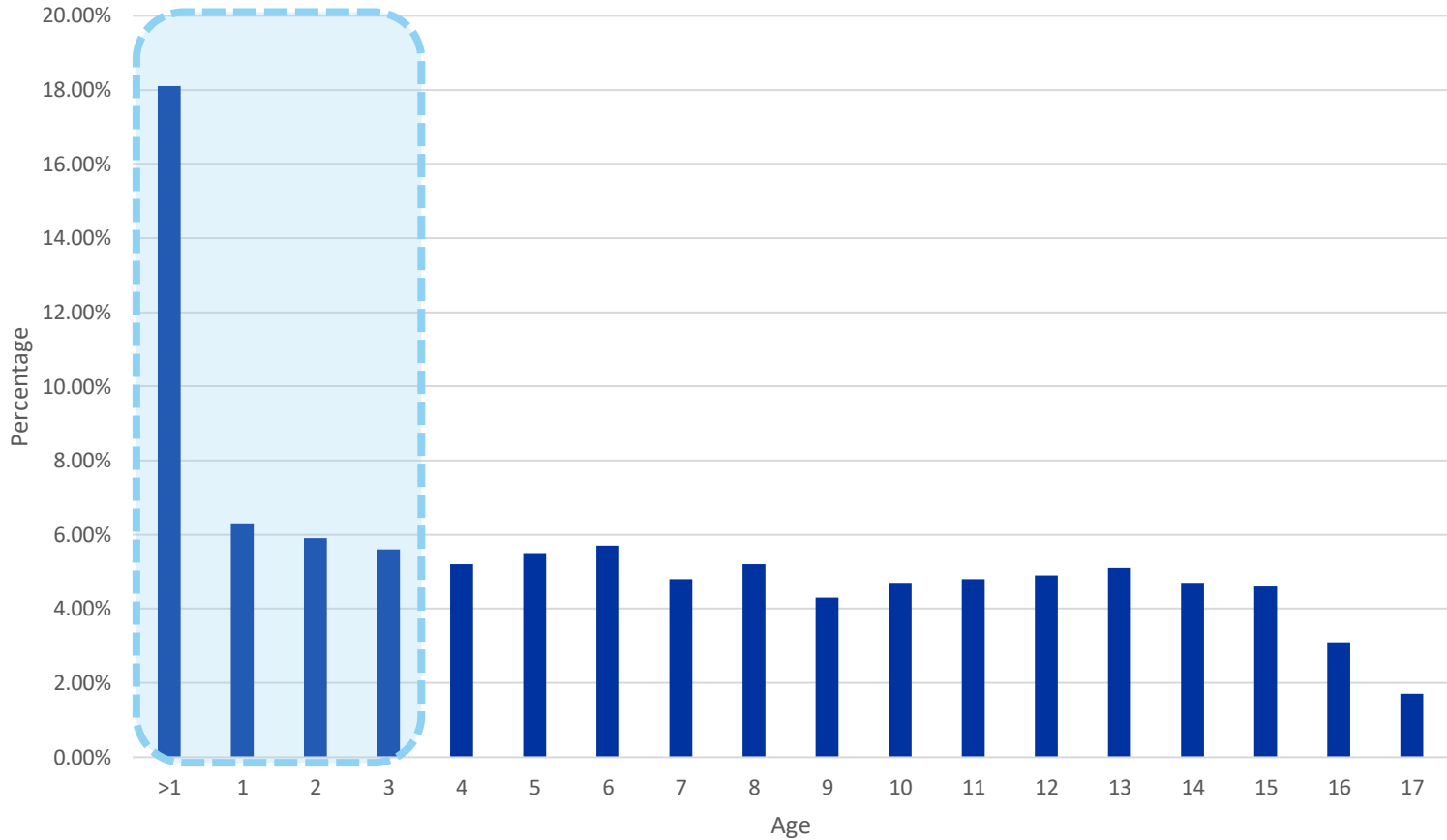
Expedited, Appropriate, and Effective Services

Ensuring services for babies and their families are timely and comprehensive while respecting their lived experiences and the intergenerational effects of social, racial, and health inequities

Trauma-Responsive Support

Responding to trauma with a healing approach while recognizing the resilience of parents and understanding the lifelong, systemic social and health inequities facing some families with young children

Highest Rates of Maltreatment - Georgia



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2023). <https://cwoutcomes.acf.hhs.gov/cwodatasite/pdf/georgia.html>



ZERO TO THREE
Safe Babies Court Team™
(SBCT)



Science of **early childhood development** to transform the **court** and **child welfare** systems to a new way of doing business

SBCT Approach: Areas of Focus



Safe Babies Approach Impact and Efficacy



No differences
in outcomes by
race or ethnicity



Double the national standard

Parents with highest ACE Scores



30% reunified

Maltreatment Recurrence within 12 months



Exit foster care 10 months earlier



Reach permanency **two times** faster than traditional child welfare

● State Team Development

Milestones for building a State Team and building the capacity of the State Team to support sites

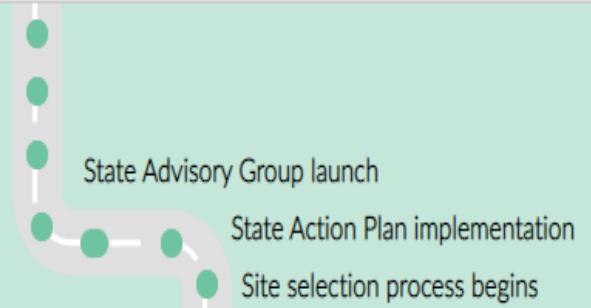


Setting the stage and building relationships

State Team hired and trained

State Action Plan developed

Communication plan developed



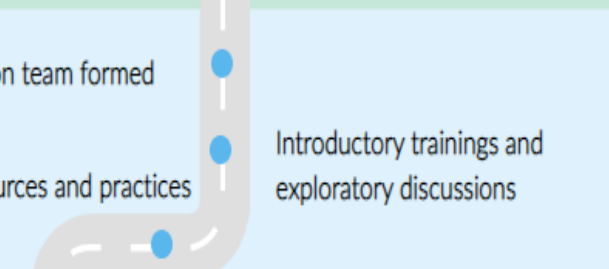
● Site Exploration

Key process steps for determining capacity and fit to implement the approach

Site exploration team formed

Inventory of community resources and practices

Introductory trainings and exploratory discussions



● Site Installation

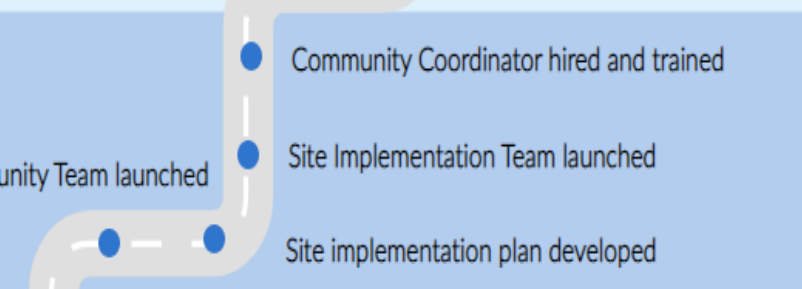
Key process steps for installing the drivers/infrastructure to support implementation and sustainability of the approach

Active Community Team launched

Community Coordinator hired and trained

Site Implementation Team launched

Site implementation plan developed



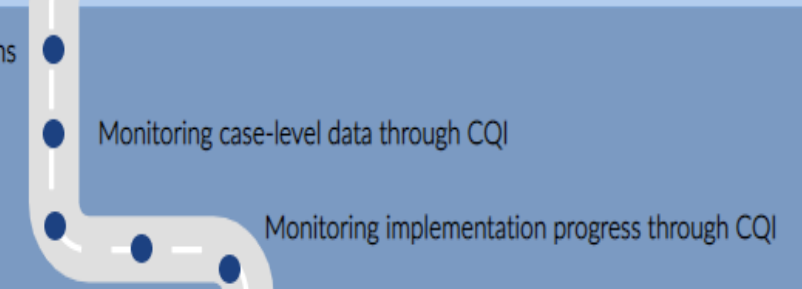
● Site Initial Implementation

Key process steps for beginning to implement the approach and continuing to build infrastructure

Family engagement begins

Monitoring case-level data through CQI

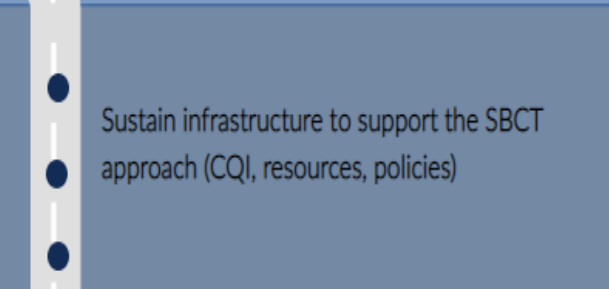
Monitoring implementation progress through CQI



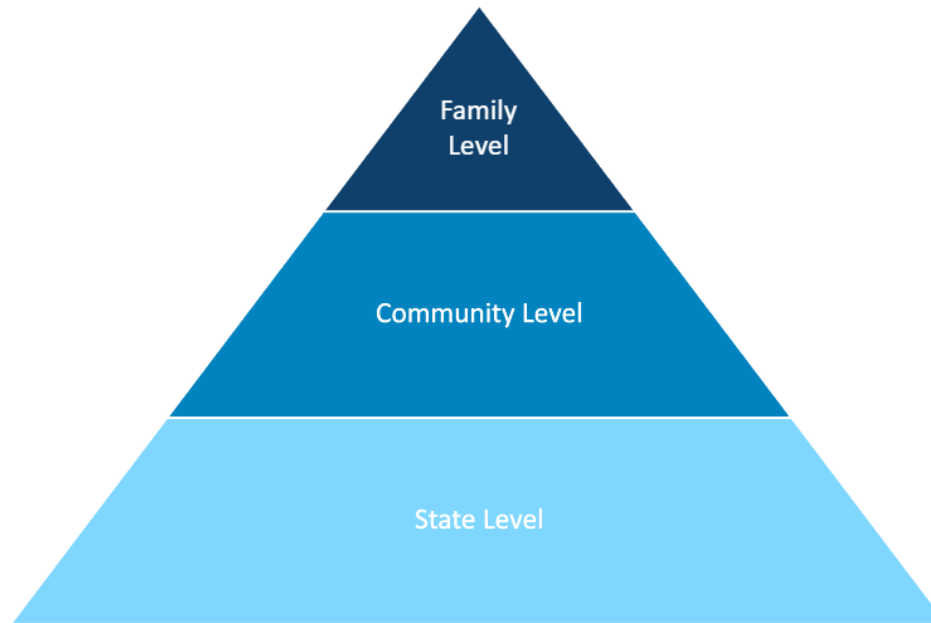
● Site Full Implementation/Sustainability

Key process steps for ongoing sustainability of the approach

Sustain infrastructure to support the SBCT approach (CQI, resources, policies)



Three levels of Work



Role of Site Implementation Team



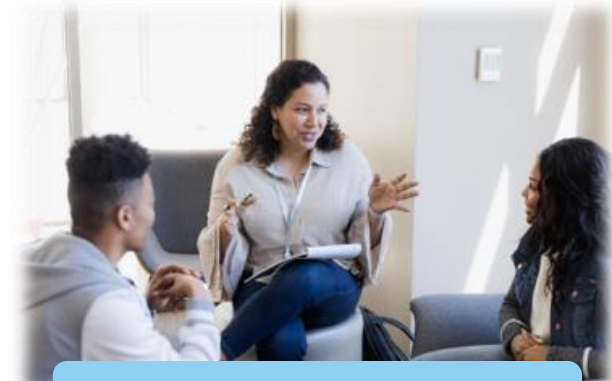
SBCT: Agents of Change



Judge



Child Welfare Staff



Community Coordinator



Family Team Meetings



Active Community Team

The Judge's Role: In-Court and Out-of-Court

Create

Create a collaborative solution-finding atmosphere in the courtroom

Develop

Develop an atmosphere of kindness, respect, and empathy for parents

Engage

Engage community partners to assure that needed services for children and families are available and accessible



The Community Coordinator

- *Build linkages across systems so that services are better aligned and coordinated*
- *Provide a consistent and strong voice for the urgent developmental needs of infants and toddlers, including the critical role of early caregiver-child relationships*
- *Elevate parent voice throughout the child welfare process.*



Child Welfare Staff

Engaging parents in the approach and empowering them in the case process

Facilitating access to systems and supports

Building community partnerships that increase coordination, alignment and integration of services and supports



The Family Team & Family Team Meetings



- *Regular meetings, with neutral facilitation*
- *Discussions center on the **specific developmental needs** of the infant/toddler*
- *Empower parents, shared planning process*
- *Teaming – solution-focused, mutual respect, no surprises*

How Do We Know the SBCT Approach is Working?

Responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences

83.7%

reached permanency within 12 months among children with closed cases.

Compared to the Children's Bureau national standard at **40.5%**



JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC



48.6%

were reunified with parents



32.2%

were adopted



14%

were placed with a fit and willing relative

74.3%

was the lowest percentage among SBCT sites for reaching permanency within 12 months across all analysis of ACEs and risk factors

Note: No significant differences for permanency within 12 months by child's race/ethnicity.



Quality Improvement Center
for Research-Based
Infant-Toddler Court Teams

Safe Babies
Court Team™
Approach

CITATION

Adverse Childhood Experiences, Family Risk Factors, and Child Permanency Outcomes of Very Young Children Involved in Safe Babies Court Team™ Sites is part of a series of briefs based on the evaluation of the Quality Improvement Center for Research-Based Infant-Toddler Court Teams.

Georgia's Project Objectives & Workplan



Georgia Thrive: A Family Strengthening Program

Mission:

Georgia seeks to improve the well-being of families and young children by strengthening the system of care, transforming courts, closing the pipelines to child welfare system involvement, and eliminating racial disparities with the goal of achieving a safe, permanent home to grow and thrive.

Lay translation:

We bring together partners to support young children and their families who face court or child-welfare involvement so each will have a safe, stable home to grow and thrive.

Vision:

To establish a well-coordinated child welfare and court system that provides trauma-responsive and culturally competent services to young children and their families resulting in safe stable communities where individuals thrive.

HRSA-Funded Georgia Infant-Toddler Court Project

**\$3 million
across
5 years**

For statewide
and local site
planning and
implementation

**3 local
sites
funded**

With 1/3 of the
grant's funds
supporting local
site
implementation
and trainings

**National
technical
assistance**

From Zero to
Three and HRSA
to help build
state-level
leadership and
infrastructure

A photograph of a family of four—a woman with curly hair, a man with a beard, and two young children—gathered around a laptop. They are all looking at the screen with interest and smiles. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal filter.

Project Goal

To improve Georgia's statewide systems and policies to support young children (ages 0-3) and their families who are involved, or at risk of involvement, with the child welfare system, and build capacity to prevent child maltreatment more broadly.

Project Objectives

Establish leadership capacity

in Georgia to inform ITC implementation through the creation and training of a state-level ITC leadership team. The leadership team will include state-level partners, local leaders, and families with lived experience.

Develop a state action plan

to guide ITC implementation in the state through a systematic process led by the state-level ITC leadership team and involving the ITC National Resource Center, relevant stakeholders, and families with lived experience.

Increase capacity through training

of state and local partners in the ITC approach and topics related to the developmental health, mental health, and wellbeing of very young children.

Establish local capacity for ITC implementation

by establishing three local ITC sites through a Request for Applications process informed by the state action plan, ITC leadership team and families with lived experience.

Improve child and family outcomes

during and after child welfare and/or court involvement demonstrated through collection and evaluation of program outcomes data at the 3 local ITC sites. (Process & Outcome Evaluation)

Establish sustainability and scaling plan

utilizing evaluation data and learnings from implementation to inform sustainability and future scaling of the model across Georgia. (Implementation & Sustainability Evaluation)

Project Infrastructure

Infant-Toddler Court (ITC) Leadership Team

The ITC Leadership Team will provide leadership and oversight to all project activities, support creation of the state action plan, and inform project implementation.

- State Advisory Board
- Local Implementation Workgroup
- Funding & Sustainability Workgroup
- Data & Evaluation Workgroup
- Other Workgroups to be identified by ITC Leadership Team

Local Infant-Toddler Court (ITC) Sites

Local ITC sites will be selected through a Request for Applications process based on criteria developed by the ITC Leadership Team. Sites will receive funding for at least 3 years at \$60,000 per year and receive technical assistance from the COE and National TA Center.

- Local ITC Site 1: Site Coordinator Data Support
- Local ITC Site 2: Site Coordinator Data Support
- Local ITC Site 3: Site Coordinator Data Support

GA-AIMH Training Team

GA-AIMH will be the training provider for the project. They will help build local site capacity to serve families with young children in developmentally appropriate ways.

Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health

The COE will provide leadership, backbone, & evaluation support to the ITC project, including a full-time project coordinator.

Project Timeline

Year 1

Planning and development of leadership team, statewide action plan, and RFA for local sites

Years 2-5

Implementation of statewide action plan, funding of 3 local sites, and evaluation of project activities.

Year 2: Local sites 1 & 2 identified

Year 3: Local site 3 identified

All local sites will be funded for at least 3 years.



By the end
of Year 1...


We will have 5 key documents to guide our work

- Disparity Impact Statement
- State Action Plan
- Request for Applications for Local Sites
- Sustainability Plan
- Evaluation Plan

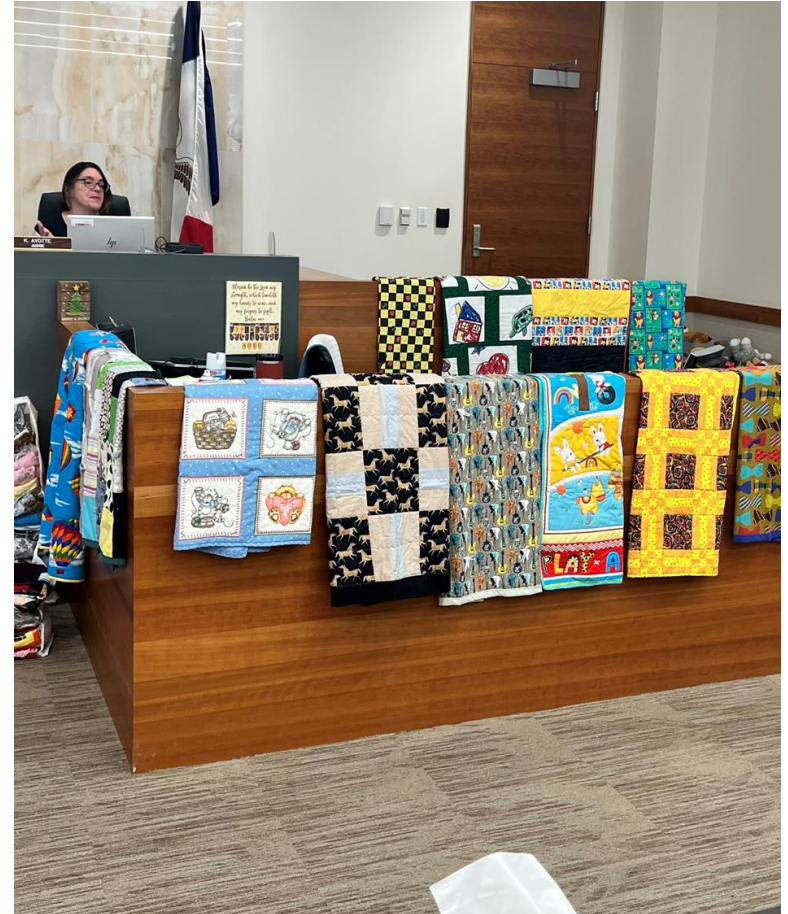
These will be living documents and will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to address changes in implementation.



Infant Toddler Court Programs keep babies and their families at the center by...

- Advocating for frequent, quality family time
 - Incorporating the voices of people with lived experience
 - Raising awareness for the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers
 - Training agents of change and community members
- 

Iowa ITCP Site Visit





Safe Babies
Courtroom
vs.
Non-Safe
Babies
Courtroom




Early Connections Last a Lifetime





Questions?

Some of the content in today's presentation was provided by the *National Resource Center for the Infant-Toddler Court Program* at Zero To Three (www.zerotothree.org)



Thank you!

Twanna Nelson
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