

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY
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NEWS RELEASE

2004 DAKOTA COUNTY JUVENILE PROSECUTION STATISTICS RELEASED

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2004 involving **juvenile prosecutions** handled by his Office. In Minnesota, County Attorneys prosecute all crimes committed by juveniles (youth 10-17 years old) that occur in the county including felonies, gross misdemeanors, misdemeanors and some petty misdemeanors. Backstrom pointed out the following highlights:

- The total number of **juveniles prosecuted** by his office decreased from 2,041 in 2003 to **1,968** in 2004, a decrease of 3.5%.
- The total number of **juvenile offenses charged**ⁱ also decreased from 2,597 in 2003 to **2,335** in 2004, a decrease of 11%.
- The number of **felony level juvenile offenders**ⁱⁱ charged remained virtually unchanged (354 in 2003 to **359** in 2004).

2004 INCREASE/DECREASE IN JUVENILES CHARGED (BY CITY)

Jurisdictions showing an **increase** in the number of juvenile offenders charged included:

- ↑ Burnsville (284 to 292)
- ↑ Hastings (124 to 133)
- ↑ Mendota Heights (37 to 55)
- ↑ Rosemount (120 to 140)
- ↑ South St. Paul (124 to 162)

Cities showing a **decrease** in the number of juvenile offenders charged included:

- ↓ Apple Valley (368 to 349)
- ↓ Farmington (79 to 70)
- ↓ Inver Grove Heights (161 to 122)
- ↓ Lakeville (251 to 191)
- ↓ West St. Paul (102 to 86)

Jurisdictions, which **remained** virtually the same in the number of juvenile offenders charged, were:

- Dakota County Sheriff (50 to 46)
- Eagan (301 to 297)

Criminal Division
Scott A. Hersey, Head

Juvenile and Protective Services Division
Donald E. Bruce, Head

Civil Division
Jay R. Stassen, Head

Victim/Witness Coordinator
Patricia Ronken

Office Manager
Norma J. Zabel

Child Support Enforcement Division
Sandra M. Torgerson, Head

OVERALL DECREASE IN JUVENILE PROSECUTIONS

Backstrom said this is the second year in a row that Dakota County has experienced a decrease in the overall number of juveniles prosecuted for criminal acts after four years of increases. The drop is slight, however, and the number of juveniles prosecuted for crime in Dakota County has risen dramatically since 1990, when only 628 juveniles were charged, compared to an all time high of 2,070 in 2002. Several reasons account for this increase. *Backstrom stated: "We have law enforcement officers today who are working more closely than ever with schools in our community to identify and resolve criminal matters involving juveniles quickly."* He also noted that the number of youth in Dakota County is growing rapidly. The number of 10 to 17-year-old youths in Dakota County is increasing at a rate almost two and a half times as fast as the statewide average.

JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE

Following a similar trend with the decrease in the number of overall juvenile prosecutions, the number of charges for **violent juvenile offenses**ⁱⁱⁱ decreased by almost 22% from 460 in 2003 to **378** in 2004. The main violent crime committed by juveniles was misdemeanor assault which decreased from 319 offenses charged in 2003 to **223** in 2004 (a 43% decline). *Backstrom commented: "While it may be early to highlight a significant trend, it is obviously a good sign seeing the number of juvenile crimes of violence dropping for the second consecutive year in Dakota County."*

FELONY LEVEL CHARGES AGAINST JUVENILES

While the number of juvenile felony offenders charged in 2004 remained steady at **359** (compared to 354 felony charges the year before), what is of significance is that the 2003 and 2004 numbers are 18% less than the ten-year average of 426. Backstrom said he was pleased to see a significant drop in the number of serious crimes committed by youth in Dakota County the past few years. *"We have always had a low number of felony level offenses committed by youth for a county our size," Backstrom commented. "This reflects that Dakota County continues to have a low crime rate and is a safe place to live," he added.*

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR JUVENILES

Prevention of juvenile crime has long been a priority for County Attorney Backstrom, who has long served as a co-chair of the Juvenile Justice Committees for both the Minnesota County Attorneys Association and the National District Attorneys Association. *"I am a strong believer in prevention, early intervention, and education efforts to reduce juvenile crime," Backstrom stated. "I believe the single most effective thing we can do to reduce crime in our nation is to invest time, resources and energy in our nation's children," he added.*

Backstrom indicated that the Dakota County Attorney's Office coordinates a number of **youth accountability programs for first time offenders** involved in the illegal use of alcohol, small amounts of marijuana, and tobacco, as well as lower level property crimes. A more intensive program for second time users of alcohol or small amounts of marijuana is also available. Youth accountability programs are designed to insure that youth committing certain first or second time non-violent offenses are held responsible for their criminal behavior quickly outside of the courtroom. *Backstrom commented: "While these programs divert youthful offenders outside of the court process, they are designed to insure appropriate accountability with an education and prevention focus. Youth pay for the cost of attending these alternatives to court, which is equivalent to the fine they would receive from a judge for these offenses and, where appropriate, pay restitution to the victim and complete some community work service. A parent or guardian is also required to attend all youth accountability programs with their child, which we believe is important and necessary."* In total, **1,801 juvenile offenders were referred to various accountability programs** as an alternative to juvenile court in 2004. Juveniles successfully completing these programs are not prosecuted in juvenile court for these offenses.

The County Attorney's Office continued to work closely with Dakota County School Districts and Police Departments to insure a healthy and safe learning environment for children by prioritizing and quickly prosecuting crimes that occur in school or are related to school activities. This program, called **Prioritizing Prosecutions in Schools (PPS)**, provides for fast tracking of school-related crimes and establishes closer connections between police, prosecutors and school administrators to prevent future crime through educational programs for staff and students. *"I believe that quicker prosecution of crimes occurring in schools serves as a deterrent to juvenile criminal activity," Backstrom indicated.*

The **Juvenile Firesetter Education and Intervention program** for youth ages 6-17 who are curious about or caught lighting a fire served **29** Dakota County juveniles and their parents in 2004. This quarterly educational class, which is coordinated by the Dakota County Attorney's Office, has been well received and is a joint project with the State Fire Marshall's Office and local fire departments in our community.

The **Peer Court program**, which is a joint project of the District Court, Community Corrections and the County Attorney, has been in existence since 2000 and takes place in six area high schools (Apple Valley, Inver Grove Heights, South St. Paul, Hastings, Lakeville and Burnsville). Peer Court allows teens to serve as jurors and personally become involved in resolving the problem of juvenile crime in their community. *"Peer Court not only is a unique way of holding juvenile offenders accountable for their actions, it is a great learning experience for members of the peer jury," Backstrom noted.* In 2004, **71** juveniles were referred to Peer Court. District Court Judge Tom Poch was instrumental in establishing this program and remains active in its implementation in Dakota County.

EXPANDED JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION INITIATIVES

Backstrom indicated that his office was involved in numerous crime prevention efforts in 2004. The Accelerated Court Truancy Program has been expanded during the 2003-2004 school year to include Independent School District 197 (West St. Paul, Mendota Heights and part of Eagan) in addition to District 199 (Inver Grove Heights). Judge Leslie Metzen played a critical role in getting the ACT pilot program initiated and Judge Ed Lynch is also active in the program. The program requires all truants and a parent or guardian to attend an accelerated truancy diversion meeting, including a judge, prosecutor and school administrative personnel after a youth's third unexcused absence from school. A seventh unexcused absence results in immediate court intervention. Traditional truancy efforts do not result in intervention until after a seventh unexcused absence and court action does not usually occur until after 10-11 unexcused absences. The accelerated program is designed to address these unexcused absences more quickly in hopes of getting these children back into school and off the streets. Backstrom said that studies have shown that children who are truant from school are more likely to engage in criminal behavior and abuse alcohol and other drugs. *"Keeping kids in school not only helps them get the education they need to become successful and productive adults, it reduces crime in our community," Backstrom noted.* The ACT program received recognition by the National Association of counties in 2004 as an innovative program.

An **anti-bullying initiative** was launched by the County Attorney as part of the PPS program in the 2002-03 school year. Backstrom indicated that bullying is often dismissed as part of growing up, but it's actually an early form of aggressive and violent behavior. *"Bullying adversely impacts a lot of children. Bullying peaks in middle school and can become even more dangerous if it continues into high school," Backstrom stated.* It has been reported that 160,000 children skip school every day in America because they fear being attacked or intimidated by another student. Up to 60 percent of children who bully will have a criminal record before the age of 24. Backstrom has developed two 45-minute presentations (one for grade 4th-8th students and one for teachers or parents) which cover: the types of bullying and harassing behavior, statistics associated with it, and provides valuable information for bullies, victims, bystanders, staff and parents. In 2004, over 4,300 students, teachers and parents heard Backstrom's anti-bullying message. Backstrom, along with the Dakota County Public Health

Department and the Violence Prevention Initiative sponsored a workshop during 2004 for school staff on the subject of reducing violence and aggressive behavior in schools and made many resources available concerning these matters to school officials.

Details of the juvenile cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2004 are broken down by type of crime and jurisdiction on the attached charts. In addition to the three statistical charts, attached are three separate charts that cover trends in overall juvenile delinquency prosecutions, juvenile violent crime charges and juvenile dangerous weapons charges. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at www.co.dakota.mn.us/attorney.

If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

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ⁱ Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

ⁱⁱ An individual may be charged with more than one felony offense in one behavioral incident.

ⁱⁱⁱ Violent juvenile offenses include all levels of homicide, attempted homicide, assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses and terroristic threats.

2004 JUVENILE FELONY OFFENSES

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Burglary	Theft Related	Drug Related	Dangerous Weapons	Assault Related	Criminal Damage to Property	Sex Related	Terroristic Threats	Forgery Related	Unauthorized Use Motor Vehicle	Receiving Stolen Property	Arson	Fleeing In A Motor Vehicle	Robbery	Kidnapping	Criminal Vehicle Injury	Homicide (Including Attempts)	Obstructing Justice	Traffic Related	Physical Abuse of Minor	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS	
Apple Valley	16	14	4	2	5	4	6	4	4	5	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	73	60
Burnsville	5	3	3	0	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	18
Dakota County Sheriff *	13	5	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	16
Eagan	15	12	2	12	1	8	1	4	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	61	53
Farmington	2	7	4	0	4	0	3	0	3	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	24
Hastings	11	8	6	5	1	0	4	2	1	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42	34
Inver Grove Heights	2	7	3	1	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	17
Lakeville	21	6	4	3	1	3	4	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	51	43	
Mendota Heights	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	4
Other Law Enforcement	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	7
Rosemount	9	8	2	2	2	0	2	0	4	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	31
South St. Paul	20	9	3	2	4	2	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	52	36
West St. Paul	1	10	3	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	22	16	
TOTAL	115	91	36	30	27	23	23	17	16	14	14	9	9	8	4	2	1	1	0	0	440	359	

* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul and West St. Paul Police Departments and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

** Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

2004 JUVENILE GROSS MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Theft	Obstructing Justice	Dangerous Weapons	Criminal Damage to Property	Forgery Related	Assault Related	Traffic Related	Stolen Property	Burglary	Sex Related	Arson	Furnishing Alcohol to Minor	Disorderly Conduct Related	Intent to Escape Tax on MV	Contrib. to the Del. of a Minor	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	3	4	4	2	3	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	23	22
Burnsville	9	3	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
Dakota County Sheriff *	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Eagan	5	3	5	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	20	20
Farmington	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
Hastings	1	2	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Inver Grove Heights	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Lakeville	6	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	12	12
Mendota Heights	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Other Law Enforcement	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Rosemount	1	1	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
South St. Paul	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
West St. Paul	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
TOTAL	27	21	17	13	8	6	5	4	4	3	3	1	0	0	0	112	108

* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul and West St. Paul Police Departments and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

** Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

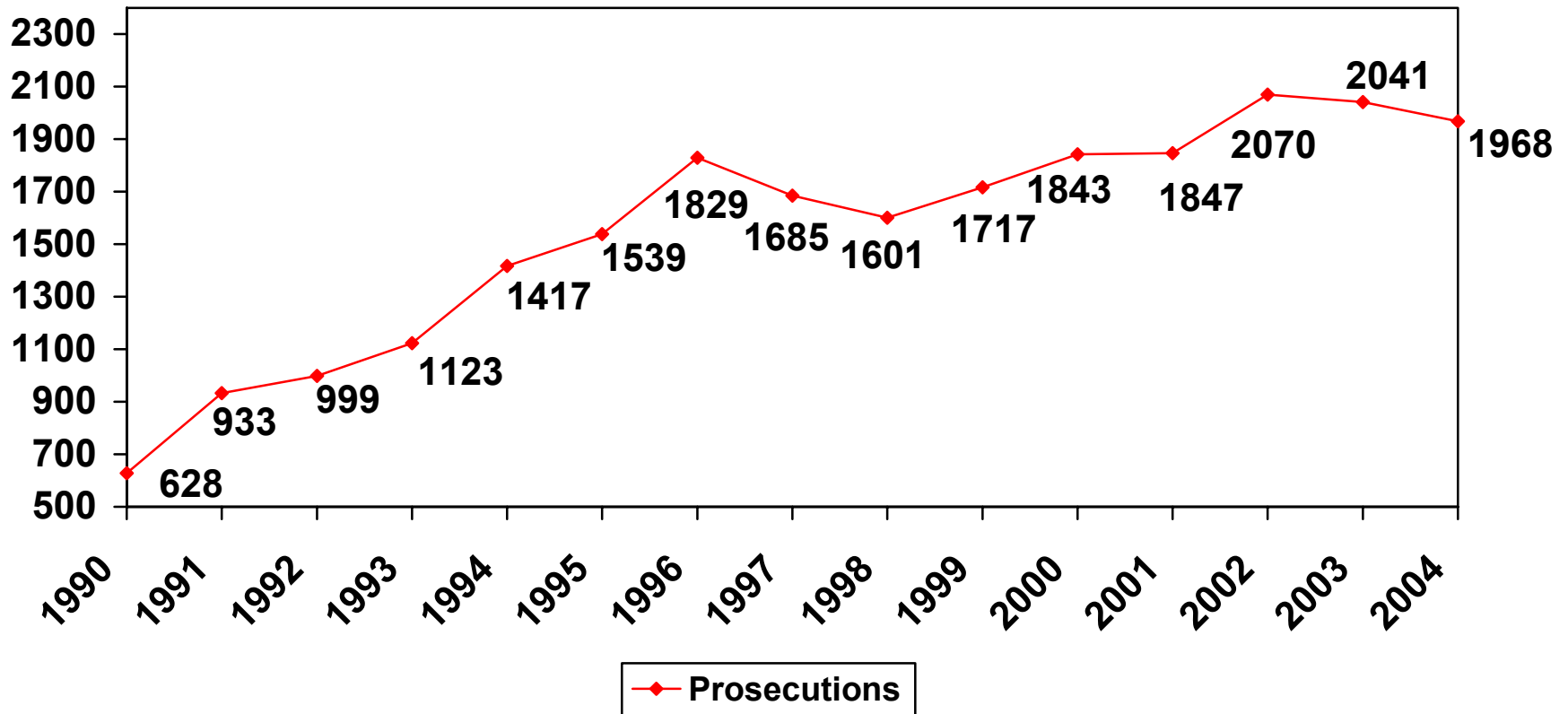
2004 JUVENILE MISDEMEANOR & PETTY MISDEMEANOR OFFENSES

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY JAMES C. BACKSTROM COUNTY ATTORNEY 1560 HIGHWAY 55 HASTINGS, MN 55033-2392 651-438-4438	Disorderly Conduct Related	Theft	Assault Related	Traffic Misdemeanors	Petty Misdemeanors	Consumption/Possession of Alcohol	Criminal Damage to Property	Burglary; Trespassing	Stolen Property	Ordinance Violation/Non-weapon	Obstructing Justice (Non-Traffic)	Tampering With a Motor Vehicle	Public Nuisance	Dangerous Weapons	Ordinance Violation/Weapon Related	Violation of an OFP or Harassment Order	Legal Drugs	Sex-Related	Poss. of a Small Amount of Marijuana-Petty	Arson	Game and Fish Violation	DUI	TOTAL CHARGES	TOTAL OFFENDERS
Apple Valley	93	67	51	16	18	12	6	7	10	5	4	2	5	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	303	267
Burnsville	81	100	24	17	29	10	11	4	3	6	5	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	295	259
Dakota County Sheriff	7	1	7	14	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	29
Eagan	64	44	38	32	31	15	13	12	1	8	6	7	0	4	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	280	224
Farmington	16	8	4	5	1	4	3	0	1	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	39
Hastings	27	17	20	9	6	9	10	5	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	109	89
Inver Grove Heights	37	16	25	12	9	5	4	1	1	3	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	104
Lakeville	47	32	6	25	20	11	10	3	2	2	2	1	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	168	136
Mendota Heights	24	6	6	6	3	3	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	55	48
Other Law Enforcement	4	0	0	8	3	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	16
Rosemount	44	24	11	9	12	2	1	8	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	118	100
South St. Paul	52	13	26	9	8	6	9	4	11	0	1	6	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	148	124
West St. Paul	7	31	5	15	8	1	2	6	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	82	66
TOTAL	503	359	223	177	151	79	71	55	36	32	29	22	17	11	5	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	1783	1501

* Drug-related are reported under the city in which the offense occurred. The Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul and West St. Paul Police Departments and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

** Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

RECENT TRENDS IN **JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PROSECUTIONS** Filed by the Dakota County Attorney's Office



From 1990 to 2003, the increase in juvenile delinquency prosecutions is 225%. These include some petty misdemeanors and all misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors and felonies committed by Dakota County youth under the age of 18 in Dakota County.

Compiled by
JAMES C. BACKSTROM
DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY

JUVENILE VIOLENT CRIME CHARGES IN DAKOTA COUNTY

TOTAL CHARGES FOR JUVENILE CRIMES OF VIOLENCE (HOMICIDES, ATTEMPTED HOMICIDES, ASSAULTS, OFFENSES INVOLVING DANGEROUS WEAPONS, KIDNAPPING, ROBBERY, SEX OFFENSES AND TERRORISTIC THREATS)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Violent Crime Charges</u>
1995	444
1996	485
1997	438
1998	420
1999	433
2000	411
2001	442
2002	494
2003	460
2004	378
Ten Year Average ...	441

The 378 violent crime charges in 2004 represent an 18% decrease from the 460 charges in 2003.

RECENT TRENDS IN JUVENILE DANGEROUS WEAPONS- RELATED CHARGES

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Felonies	45	39	23	34	22	28	35	30	23	30
Gross Misdemeanors	5	13	7	5	5	12	6	3	8	17
Misdemeanors	16	26	17	19	17	10	8	4	11	11
Ordinance Violations	14	22	14	13	8	15	12	11	9	5
TOTAL:	80	100	61	71	52	65	61	48	51	63
THE TEN YEAR AVERAGE IS 65.2										

Compiled by:
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