

**POLICY NO: 55 CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY & PROCEDURE**

**Key Policy Contact Person:** Manager, Our Village Family Childcare

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

OVFC (OVFC) Child safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child friendly environment where of children and young people being cared for and educated by the service are safe and feel safe. OVFC advocates for the care and protection of all children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation or family or social background. Children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect. The interest of the children must be paramount at all times, including when intervention occurs to protect them.

OVFC applies the highest level of diligence and accountability in reporting suspected child safety concerns and allegations against staff or volunteers of child abuse and misconduct involving children. This policy provides an overview of our service’s approach to implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards within an Early Childhood Education and Care setting.

**CRITICAL INFORMATION:**

- All staff, Educators, students, and volunteers at OVFC are responsible for Child Wellbeing.
- All suspected child abuse or inappropriate behaviour involving children or young people must be reported.
- Different circumstances may require reporting to multiple agencies.
- Failure to report suspected abuse or protect children and young people from suspected abuse may result in a criminal offence.

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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Seek to prevent child abuse occurring within OVFC.
- Develop cultural safety within OVFC.
- Support the provision of quality services to children and prevent or respond to any abuse towards children.
- Ensure OVFC complies with the Child Safety Standards System to protect children from abuse, consider all allegations and concerns as serious and respond to all allegations consistently in line with the organisations policies and procedures and the Victorian Governments Reportable Conduct Scheme.
- Ensure all staff, Educators, students, and volunteers know and understand the process for responding to and reporting concerns or allegations about child safety.
- Promote cultural safety for Aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and a safe environment for children with a disability.
- Comply with the Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme to build our capacity as a service, to prevent and respond to allegations of child abuse.

**OUTCOME:**

To enable everyone within our service to understand their obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guide our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of children. Enabling everyone within our service to respond to and report suspected child abuse. This policy reflects and must be read in conjunction with the Victorian Child safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

**SCOPE/RESPONSIBILITIES:**

This document applies to all Educators, families, coordination unit staff, volunteers, and students of OVFC. Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health – Policy – Child Safety and Reportable Conduct Policy & Procedure.

**STATEMENT OF DIVERSITY**

Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health is committed to improving the health of our community and being accessible to all, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, people with a disability, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex, Queer, Asexual and other sexually or gender diverse (LGBTIQA+) people and other socially vulnerable groups and supporting their communities across the lifespan from birth to older age.

**DEFINITIONS:**

<b>Child</b>	A person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.
<b>Child Protection</b>	Any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm and to promote the safety, stability, and development of

	children.
<b>Child Abuse</b>	Any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from harm and to promote the safety, stability, and development of children.
<b>Child Safety</b>	Child safety includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures, or allegations of child abuse.
<b>Child Safety Officer</b>	The Child Safety Officer is a nominated staff member with the responsibility, authority, knowledge, and training to receive and act on any child safety concerns in relation to the organisation’s staff, volunteers, students, Educators, contractors, or board members.
<b>Child Sexual Assault</b>	Any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger, or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child’s inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.
<b>Reasonable Grounds for Belief</b>	A belief based on reasonable grounds that child abuse has occurred when all known considerations or facts relevant to the formation of a belief are taken into account and these are objectively assessed. Circumstances or considerations may include the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there are any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.
<b>Reportable Conduct</b>	Under the Reportable Conduct Scheme, reportable conduct will include allegations against workers or volunteers of child abuse and misconduct involving children. For example, sexual misconduct or offences, grooming, ‘sexting,’ inappropriate physical contact with a child or other conduct that crosses professional boundaries concerning children.
<b>Child Safe Standards</b>	Eleven Standards replaced the current seven and include requirements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involve families and communities in organisations’ efforts to keep children and young people safe.</li> <li>• provide greater focus on safety for Aboriginal children and young people.</li> <li>• manage the risk of child abuse in online environments.</li> </ul>

	<p>The new Standards provide greater clarity and practical steps for each Standard. They outline what action organisations need to take to keep children and young people safe.</p> <p>If your organisation or group provides services or facilities for children or engages a child as a contractor, employee, or volunteer, you have a legal obligation to comply with the Child Safe Standards</p>
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**Child Safe Commitment Statement**

Our Village Family Childcare (OVFC) in partnership with Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health (SCCH) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and has zero tolerance for child abuse. We are committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. In particular, we pay attention to the cultural safety of Indigenous children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who identify as LGBTIQ+, as well as children with a disability. Every person involved in OVFC and SCCH has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do.

Consistent with the Child Safe Standards we will do this by:

- Establishing a culturally safe environment where the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Indigenous children and young people are respected and valued.
- Embedding child safety and wellbeing in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.
- Ensuring children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- Informing and involving families and community in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
- Ensuring equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected in OVFC and SCCH policy and practice.
- Ensuring both OVFC and SCCH staff, Educators, students, contractors, and volunteers working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Providing a child focussed complaints and concerns process.
- Providing ongoing education and training to staff and volunteers to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe.
- Ensuring OVFC and SCCH physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Committing to regularly review and improve OVFC and SCCH’s implementation of the Child Safe Standards
- Documenting how OVFC and SCCH is safe for children and young people in our policies and procedures.

If you have a concern about the safety of any young people participating in our programs and services, contact OVFC Manager 9744 9252, OVFC Coordination Unit 9744 9534 /ourvillage@scchc.org.au or our child safety officer, Head of Services 9477 4455.

Situations in which a child is at immediate risk should be reported to Police by calling 000.

More information on the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme can be found on the Commission for Children and Young People website <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards>

**PROCEDURES:**

**If any person is at imminent risk of significant harm, call 000.**

If unsure whether a situation constitutes abuse, speak with you the or the Child Safety Officer.

**SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE:**

Any staff member, volunteer, student, or Educator who has grounds to suspect abusive activity toward a child must notify the appropriate child protection service and/or the police. They should also advise the OVFC Manager or their Coordinator about their concern. In situations where the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed, the matter should be reported to the Child Safety Officer.

Refer to Child Abuse Reporting (Mandatory Reporting) table below.

**REPORTABLE CONDUCT:** All members within our service must immediately report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct towards children by staff members, volunteers, student, and Educators to the OVFC manager or Child Safety Officer (which will be referred to the CEO). Further notifications to external regulatory bodies such as the police and the commission for Children and Young People may also be required. Refer to the reportable conduct table below.

All suspected abusive behaviour must be reported whether it has occurred recently or is understood to be a historical allegation. In such historical cases, even where a child who is believed to have experienced abuse is now over 18 years of age, OVFC can conduct an internal investigation and explore avenues of redress. These avenues may include exploring means of supporting the survivor of the alleged abuse.

If the CEO receives a report of suspected child abuse by a staff member, Educator, student, or volunteer, they must report the allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People within three (3) businesses days –

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/about-reportingallegations/> Staff must immediately report complaints of suspected abusive behavior or misconduct toward children by staff members, student, volunteers, and contractors, as outlined above and to any external regulatory body such as the police according to mandatory reporting requirements.

**Child Abuse Reporting Table (Mandatory Reporting)**

For Immediate help	To report concerns that are life threatening, ring Victoria Police: 000
Report if you;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Received a disclosure from a child about abuse or neglect,</li> <li>•Observed indicators or abuse or neglect</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Been made aware of possible harm via your involvement in the community external to your professional role.</li> <li>• Have formed a reasonable belief that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm because of abuse or neglect</li> </ul>
When do I report?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediately when you become aware of an incident, or you form a reasonable belief.</li> </ul>
How do I report sexual abuse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with your coordinator, manager or Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health Child Safety Officer, they will support you to make the report.</li> <li>• Report to police via your local police station. They will transfer the case to the relevant Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation team (SOCIT) – <u>Reporting sexual offences and child abuse (police.vic.gov.au)</u></li> <li>• Report to the Department of families, Fairness and Housing, Child Protection Crisis Line by telephone on 1300 664 977</li> <li>• Report to other relevant agencies (e.g., Department of Education). Your manager or the Child Safety Officer can provide further information.</li> </ul>
How do I report other types of abuse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with your coordinator, manager, or the Child Safety Officer</li> <li>• Physical Abuse-Report to child protection 1300 664 977 after hours 13 12 78</li> <li>• Wellbeing concerns including emotional abuse or neglect where the immediate safety of the child is not compromised report to child FIRST or The Orange door on 1800 271 151 (Hume) or 1800 512 359 (Loddon). If you have immediate concerns, report to child protection on 1300 664 977.</li> <li>• Further information is available here: <u><a href="https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/reportingchild-abuse">https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/reportingchild-abuse</a></u></li> <li>• Report to other relevant agencies (e.g., Department of Education). Your coordinator, manager or the Child Safety Officer can provide further information here.</li> </ul>
What should I document?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was reported, disclosed, or witnessed?</li> <li>• Who made the report or disclosure? Who witnessed the event?</li> <li>• How was the report or disclosure made?</li> <li>• When was the report or disclosure made? When was the event witnessed?</li> <li>• Where did the event occur? (As reported, disclosed, or witnessed)</li> <li>• Who was present at the event? (As reported, disclosed, or witnessed)</li> <li>• Describe any action taken in relation to the event.</li> <li>• Record any other relevant details.</li> <li>• All documentation must be stored in the relevant client management system applicable to the to the child - Harmony.</li> </ul>
Where can I get help for myself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing child abuse can cause distress. If you need support, speak to your coordinator, manager, colleague, or Lifeworks (Employee assistance program) on 1300 361 008, 24/7.</li> </ul>

### Reportable Conduct Reporting Table

Who must report?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff, Educators, contractors, student, volunteers, and board members</li> </ul>
What do I report?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual abuse, sexual misconduct or physical violence-against, with, or in the presence of a child</li> <li>• Grooming-predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity</li> <li>• Behaviour-likely to cause significant or psychological harm</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Significant neglect-not meeting obligations to keep a child safe and well</li> </ul>
When do I report?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Immediately when you become aware of an incident, or you form a reasonable belief.</li> </ul>
How do I report?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•You will need to contact either your coordinator, service Manager or Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health’s Child Safety Officer via phone, Microsoft teams or face to face. They will support you to complete a report. Further reporting may be required to other agencies depending on the reportable conduct. The service Manager /Child Safety Officer will provide further information.</li> </ul>
What do I document?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•What was reported, disclosed, or witnessed?</li> <li>•Who made the report or disclosure? Who witnessed the event?</li> <li>•How was the report or disclosure made?</li> <li>•When was the report or disclosure made? When was the event witnessed?</li> <li>•Where did the event occur? (As reported, disclosed, or witnessed)</li> <li>•Who was present at the event? (As reported, disclosed, or witnessed)</li> <li>•Describe any action taken in relation to the event.</li> <li>•Record any other relevant details.</li> <li>•All documentation must be stored in the relevant client management system applicable to the child – Harmony.</li> </ul>
What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OVFC and Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health will gather all information and the matter will be referred to the Commission for Children and Young People through the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme</li> </ul>
Where can I get help for myself?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Discussing child abuse can cause distress. If you need support, speak to your coordinator, Manager, colleague, or Lifeworks (Employee assistance program) on 1300 361 008, 24/7.</li> </ul>

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Coordination Unit:**

OVFC staff are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies, and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with the Child Safe Standards.

**The coordination unit will:**

- Ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed.
- Model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of children, families, and Educators in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety, and wellbeing.
- Enable inclusive practices where diverse needs of all students are considered.
- Reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students.
- Promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the service including at Educator team meetings and staff meetings.
- Facilitate regular professional learning for staff and Educators to build deeper understanding

of child safety, cultural safety, child wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse.

- Create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

***Educators will:***

- Will participate in child safety and wellbeing training and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- Act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safe Environment & Child Protection Policy and Procedure.
- Ensure children's views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- Implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of children.

***Child Safe Environment***

Our Child safe environment and Child Protection alongside our Code Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and procedure sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviour between adults and children. They also clarify behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We will ensure that children are role-modelled with acceptable behaviour and explained what not acceptable behaviour is so there are also clear and consistent guidelines on what to expect from adults within OVFC.

The Child Safe Environment and Child Protection Policy and Procedure also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

***Child Empowerment***

To support the safety and wellbeing within OVFC, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages children and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between children are reinforced and we encourage peer support to ensure a sense of belonging.

***Family Engagement***

Our families and the OVFC have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement within OVFC we are committed to providing families with accessible information about our child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.



### ***Child safety knowledge, skills, and awareness***

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring Educators understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

Our Educators and staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Educators and staff will participate in child safety and wellbeing training at least annually and will include but no limited to:

- OVFC's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices.
- Completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations for the early Childhood Sector (PROTECT) online training module provided by the Department of Education annually.
- Recognising indicators of harm including harm caused by other children and young people.
- Responding effectively to child safety and wellbeing and supporting other Educators and colleagues who disclose harm.
- How to build culturally safe environments for children and young people
- Information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.
- How to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

### ***Complaints and reporting processes***

OVFC promotes a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, children, and families to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct, or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints, concerns and responding and this is documents in our Dealing with Complaints Policy and Procedure.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all Educators and staff must follow our Child Safe Environment – Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures. Our Policies and Procedures address complaints, concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, staff member, Educator, Educator visitor or family member or any other person connected to OVFC.

### ***Communications***

OVFC is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the OVFC Community:

- Ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing policy and Procedure (this document) and Child Safe Environment – Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedure.

### ***Privacy and information sharing***

OVFC collects, uses, and discloses information about children and families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws and the services Governance & Management of the FDC Service Including Confidentiality of Records Policy.

### ***Records management***

We acknowledge that good record management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with DET (Department of Education and Training).

### **Review of child safety practices**

At OVFC, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

#### **We will:**

- Review and improve our policy every 3 years or after any significant child safety incident.
- Analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- Act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with the coordination unit staff and Educators.

### **THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS**

The child safe standards aim to protect children from abuse in organisation, including physical violence, sexual offence, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect. For further explanation of the standards and the different type of abuse, please see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/>

#### **Standard 1**

- Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.

#### **Standard 2**

- Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.

#### **Standard 3**

- Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

#### **Standard 4**

- Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

#### **Standard 5**

- Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

#### **Standard 6**

- People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

#### **Standard 7**

- Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused.

#### **Standard 8**

- Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.

#### **Standard 9**

- Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

#### **Standard 10**

- Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.

#### **Standard 11**

- Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

### **REPORTABLE CONDUCT SCHEME**

The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme seeks to improve organisations' responses to allegations of child abuse and neglect by their workers and volunteers. The scheme requires centralised reporting to

the Commission for Children and Young People by relevant organisations of any allegations of child abuse and misconduct towards children made against their workers or volunteers. For further information please see: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/>

The reportable conduct scheme does not interfere with reporting obligations to Victoria Police or with Victoria Police investigations. In all circumstances, allegations of criminal conduct must be reported to Victoria Police as the priority. For information about the relationship between the Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme, download an [Information Sheet on Child Safe Standards and Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).

#### **APPENDIX:**

- (SCH Legacy) Child Abuse Response & Reporting Work Instruction
- (SCH Legacy) Client Abuse Prevention and Reporting Procedure
- SCCH Code of Conduct – Keeping Children and Young People Safe
- SCCH Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Conflict of interest Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Workplace Safety Screening Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Child Safety and Reportable Conduct Policy and Procedure
- SSCH Position Statement

#### **REFERENCES:**

- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Commissions for Children and Young People, Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing – Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- [DFFH – Mandatory Reporting to child protection in Victoria early childhood factsheet](#)
- [Reporting Child Abuse](#)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005](#)
- [Reporting Sexual Offences](#)
- [Child Protection in early Childhood](#)
- [Making a report to Child Protection](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005](#)
- [Guide to the National Quality Framework – Quality Area 2, 4, 7](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations, \(updated version July 1, 2023\) – Regulation 168, 84](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Law ACT 2010 \(updated version July 1, 2023\) 162A](#)
- [DFFH – changes to child protection law](#)

#### **RELATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES & WORK INSTRUCTIONS:**

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- Governance and Management of FDC Service Including Confidentiality and Retention of Records - 8
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- Assessment, Approval and Reassessment of Approved Family Day Care Residences and venues – 2
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- (SCH Legacy) Client Abuse Prevention and Reporting Procedure
- SCCH Code of Conduct – Keeping Children and Young People Safe
- SCCH Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Conflict of interest Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Workplace Safety Screening Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Risk Management Policy and Procedure
- SCCH Child Safety and Reportable Conduct Policy and Procedure
- SSCH Position Statement
- Orientation of FDC Educators Work Instruction
- OVFC Playgroups Work Instruction
- Overnight Care Work Instruction
- Recruitment of FDC Educators Work Instruction

**VERSION CONTROL AND LEGISLATION:**

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