

# Setting the Stage for Quality Caseworker Visits

## Course Description

Since the federal passing of the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006, and California's enactment of SB 342, federal and state legislation has established increasingly higher performance standards for probation and social worker visits with youth in out-of-home care. Federal and state guidelines have been implemented in relation to the frequency, location and quality of caseworker visits, which have been noted to have a strong correlation to positive outcomes for foster care youth.

This class is designed to provide a framework for understanding caseworker visits with foster youth and the required mandates. The class has a primary focus on best practice guidelines for quality visitation with children and youth, alternate care providers and parents or guardians.

Upon completion participants will be able to:

- Recognize federal and state regulations for caseworker visits with youth in placement
- Identify the link between the frequency and quality of visits to safety, placement stability, and permanency
- Demonstrate strategies to address three areas of assessment: safety, permanency, and well-being
- Demonstrate key elements of a quality visit
- Identify how and where to document visitation requirements

## Instructors

*Dorothy Byron-Arrington* has expertise in the areas of Child Welfare; Child and Family Teaming (CFT); Team Decision Making (TDM); Resource Family Approval (RFA); Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).

*Jami Johnson* has 14 years of experience in social work. She currently serves as program administrator for the Merced County Human Services Agency, where she conducts research, organizes social-service programs and coordinates staff to support foster parents and the community. Johnson has also worked as a liaison to the Merced PD Gang Violence Suppression Unit and Hilmar Unified School District, and she has served in leadership for the Merced County Human Services Agency.

*Jennifer Pulliam* is a supervising probation officer responsible for her agency's community resources unit. For the past five years she has worked with probation foster youth in placement and served as the administrator of her agency's foster family program. Her areas of expertise include relative and non-relative placement, Title 22 regulations, and group home monitoring and investigations. Pulliam is also a member of the Probation Advisory Committee of the Resource Center for Family-Focused Practice, UC Davis Extension.

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## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Identify the link between the frequency and quality of visits to safety, placement stability and permanency
- ▶ Discuss three strategies to address three areas of assessment: safety, permanency and well-being
- ▶ Name three key elements of a quality visit
- ▶ Identify two important areas when documenting visitation requirements

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## Group Agreements



What do you need to  
focus and learn today?

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## Let's Get Started

- ▶ Share your name and current role
- ▶ How long have you been a caseworker?
- ▶ Share a strength you bring when completing caseworker visits
- ▶ Share a challenge you face



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## What is your role?

Are you a probation officer or social worker?

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## Federal & State Regulations

• Federal Child and Family Services Act of 2006 (PL 109-288) federal mandate regarding caseworker visits (also SB703, statutes of 2007).

• August 2 2011, H.R. 2790 Child and Family Services Extension and Enhancement Act was introduced to reauthorize mandates through 2016.

• California Manual of Policies and Procedures Division 31 Regulations revised to reflect these new laws (July 2, 2011).

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## Federal & State Regulations

•September 30 2011  
PL 112-34, Child and Family  
Services Improvement  
Innovation Act of 2011  
revised mandates for  
visitation and standards for  
compliance

California SB 342, Statutes  
of 2013 enacted to amend  
WIC 16516.5 and 16516.6 to  
comply with federal  
requirements of USC Title  
42 section 624(f)(2)(A),  
effective January 1, 2014  
(ACL 14-50)



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## What do we know about caseworker visits?


There is a strong correlation between quality home visits and:

- Improved assessments for safety and risk of harm
- Increased assessments for alternative permanency options
- Better identification and monitoring for intervention services
- Increased engagement with children/youth, parents and caregivers





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## Improved Outcomes



- Safety
- Permanency
- Well-Being



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## Children & Family Services Review (C-CFSR) Outcome Measures

### Safety Outcomes:

- ▶ S-1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect
- ▶ S-2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

### Permanency Outcomes:

- ▶ P-1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations
- ▶ P-2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children

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## Children & Family Services Review (C-CFSR) Outcome Measures

### Well-Being Outcomes:

- ▶ WB-1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs
- ▶ WB-2: Children/Youth receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs
- ▶ WB-3: Children/Youth receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs

California Child Welfare Indicators Project  
[http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb\\_childwelfare/](http://cssr.berkeley.edu/ucb_childwelfare/)

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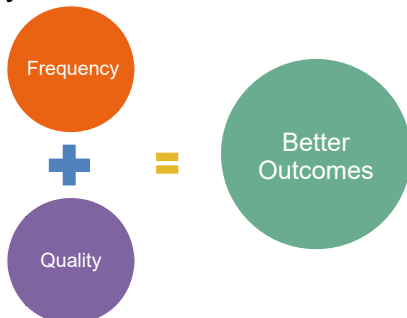
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## Simply Stated



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## You see the challenges everyday

- ▶ Examples of youth who have intentions or goals but fail to achieve them
- ▶ How could a healthy relationship have helped?



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## Elements of a Quality Visit

### Federal guidelines are clear:

- ▶ Visits must be planned in advance
- ▶ Focus is on monitoring the **safety, well being and permanence of youth** in out-of-home care

### Visits must be:

- ▶ Between a caseworker and legal parent
- ▶ Between a caseworker and a child/youth/non-minor dependent
- ▶ Between a caseworker and substitute care provider

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## Division 31 Requirements

- ▶ Represent minimum topic areas
- ▶ Guideline to keep visits focused
- ▶ Support agenda building
- ▶ Structure for documentation

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## Purpose of the Visit: Division 31-320

The purpose of caseworker contact with the child/youth is to assess the safety and well being of the child/youth and to achieve the following objectives:

- ▶ Monitor the child/youth's physical, emotional, social and educational development
- ▶ Engage and involve the child/youth and the caregiver in the development of the case plan
- ▶ Gather information about the child/youth to identify necessary services to be included in the case plan and monitor the effectiveness of those services
- ▶ Ensure the child/youth is able to maintain a relationship with siblings, relatives and adults who are important to the child/youth



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## Division 31 Continued

- ▶ Assist the child/youth in preserving and maintaining religious and ethnic identity
- ▶ Build rapport and maintain a helping relationship to provide continuity and stability
- ▶ Solicit the child/youth's input on their future and to discuss current and future placement
- ▶ Discuss plans and progress with the child/youth

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## What has Changed Since 2011?



- ▶ **Who** can visit
- ▶ **Where** to visit
- ▶ **When** to visit:  
Frequency

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## Essentials of **Who** Can Visit

- Must have a defined responsibility for case management or visitation for the child/youth
- The visit must be documented in CWS/CMS on a monthly basis (minimum) and entered by the end of the month

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## What Isn't a Quality Visit

- ▶ Being present with a child/youth when the primary reason for the contact is for a visitation or other event
- ▶ Being present during a court hearing
- ▶ A Child Family Team meeting
- ▶ Unexpected meeting with child/youth (e.g., running into them in the community or office)



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## Who Can Visit



- ▶ County probation officer
- ▶ Child welfare social worker
- ▶ Caseworker from another state under Interstate Compact for Placement of Children (ICPC)

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**DIVISION 31**

**When** – date visit was completed (time option)  
**Where** – location of contact  
**Who** – individuals present during visit and their relationship to the youth. Also, caseworker who conducted the visit.  
**What** – detailed description of information to form assessment  
**Why Information is Important** – if applicable, note discrepancies, mood/affect/complicating factors/ motivation of individual(s), bias, etc. Significance to the issues relevant to court involvement/risk/ case plan, particular attention to safety, permanency and overall well-being.  
**Why Now** – Discussion of timing of contact, information, etc.  
**Who Else Knows** – When documenting disclosures, ask about and document others who may be aware of the situation.

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## Where to Visit-SB 342



- ▶ Majority of visits (over 50%) must be in the child/youth's residence
- ▶ If visit takes place outside residence, it must be documented in the case file, CWS/CMS and court report describing the location and the reason the visit did not take place in the residence
- ▶ No more than two consecutive monthly visits may take place outside the child/youth's residence
- ▶ Best practice is to schedule for a time convenient for both the caregiver and child/youth

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## Private Discussion SB-342

- ▶ The child/youth must be seen alone **every time**
  - ▶ Facilitates a safety assessment
  - ▶ Provides the opportunity to discuss sensitive and personal issues
  - ▶ Advise the child/youth that they have the right to request that the private discussion, currently required by state law, occur outside the foster or group home
  - ▶ Provides opportunity to build rapport with the child/youth



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## When to Visit

- ▶ Each visit should have a specific purpose
- ▶ Monthly visitation is a minimum standard
- ▶ Timeliness of visits should be based on the child/youth's needs



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## Missing Youth



- ▶ The youth's whereabouts are unknown and the Court has been informed
- ▶ Monthly attempts must be made to locate the youth
- ▶ Documented attempts are recorded in CWS/CMS and court reports

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## Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP)/Out of State Placement



- ▶ Must visit the child/youth once each calendar month
- ▶ Assure a two-week period between visits

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**THE INTERSTATE COMPACT ON THE PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN**

- ▶ The child/youth is placed out-of-state in a relative, guardian or foster home under ICPC and the receiving state sends monthly reports to the case-carrying worker that are documented in CWS/CMS

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**Trauma-Informed Practice**



- ▶ Trauma is the emotional response to exposure to an actual or threatened death, serious injury or violence
- ▶ There is a lasting impact of early stress and trauma
- ▶ Response to trauma-intrusive thoughts: avoidance, hyper arousal, mood, dissociation, outbursts of anger or rage, etc.
- ▶ This doesn't excuse the behavior, but it can explain it
- ▶ Caseworkers should be mindful to avoid re-traumatizing

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**Engagement**

Encourage and foster a strengths-based relationship:



- ▶ Take time to build rapport
- ▶ Do what you say you'll do
- ▶ Listen and do not judge
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Be honest about expectations and next steps
- ▶ Use Motivational Interviewing
- ▶ Take time, consistency and reliability to build a relationship

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## Engagement Continued

Group Discussion:

What are some ways that you can build rapport even when wearing your gear?

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How NOT to do Motivational Interviewing: A conversation with "Sal" about managing his asthma

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Motivational Interviewing: A conversation with "Sal" about managing his asthma

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**Legal and Practice Foundations for Caseworker Visits with Legal Parents**

- Reasonable efforts to reunify
- Participatory case planning and services delivery
- Visitation focused on skill development and attachment



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## Our first goal is family reunification

- ▶ Comprehensive assessment of biological parent's needs
- ▶ What does the parent need to provide appropriate care and supervision and to ensure the well-being of their children? This includes:
  - ▶ Mental and physical health needs that impact parenting capacity
  - ▶ Needs related to developing parent's relationship with children/youth if established relationship did not exist prior to foster care entry
  - ▶ Parent's role in the case plan and achievement of permanency goals



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## What does a quality contact look like from a parent's view?



- ▶ Planning with the parent to develop agenda
- ▶ Develop collaborative relationship
- ▶ Respect for cultural/family norms and parental role
- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Focus on behavioral changes to mitigate safety threats and progress in meeting case plan objectives
- ▶ Coaching and developing goals for quality parent/child family time.

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## Elements of a Visit with Caregivers



- ▶ Monitor and assess the quality of care
- ▶ Follow-up on areas from last visit
- ▶ Changes in household and relationships within family
- ▶ Social support/respite needs
- ▶ Explanation of court process
- ▶ Child/youth's behaviors and adjustment
- ▶ Child/youth's well-being (health, education, mental health and development)
- ▶ Concurrent planning and permanency

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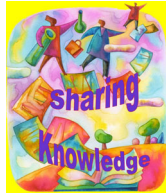
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## Caregivers

Information sharing with caregivers is not only permitted under law, it is required.

- ▶ A well-informed caregiver is better equipped to meet the needs of the child/youth
- ▶ Caregivers are a valued member of the child/youth's team and support network
- ▶ Caregivers are entitled to most of the child/youth's information



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## Quality Visits with Children/Youth

- ▶ Quality and frequency of caseworker visits with children/youth
- ▶ Caseworkers must inform foster youth of their reproductive and sexual health care rights and document in CWS/CMS
- ▶ Must talk with the child/youth about foster youth rights at least once every 6 months and document the conversation in CWS/CMS
- ▶ Foster youth credit reporting requirement and CWS/CMS documentation



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## The Four Step Planning Process

1. PREPARE
2. EXPLORE
3. DIRECT
4. WRAP UP

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## Preparation



- ▶ Schedule in advance
- ▶ Review case and service plan
- ▶ Identify barriers/concerns
- ▶ Prepare an agenda; when scheduling the meeting, ask the child/youth if there is anything they want to discuss

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## Exploration/Assessment During Visit



- ▶ Assess safety, well-being and permanency
- ▶ Immediate needs and concerns
- ▶ Review the agenda and timeframe for the meeting and adjust, if needed
- ▶ Review progress and challenges and follow up on areas from last visit
- ▶ Develop and/or review the TILP for youth ages 15 ½ and older (a new TILP should be developed every 6 months)

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## Directing Interventions

- ▶ Ask questions to assess well-being and safety (health, education, mental health, and development)
- ▶ Strengths and needs
- ▶ Explanation of court process, child/youth's plan for reunification/permanency
- ▶ Current circumstances of family
- ▶ Progress and barriers in achieving case plan objectives
- ▶ Cultural, religious and ethnic considerations
- ▶ Identify supports to help the child/youth
- ▶ Develop agreements on priority areas for next visit



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## Safety is a Primary Concern for Children/Youth in Care



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## Safety Protecting Children/ Youth AND Community

- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Sexual (including CSEC)
- ▶ Emotional
- ▶ Neglect



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## Permanency



- ▶ Stability and permanency in their living situation
- ▶ Family relationships are known and preserved
- ▶ Connection with a forever person
- ▶ Ongoing Family Finding efforts

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## Well-Being

- ▶ Physical health
- ▶ Emotional health
- ▶ Development needs
- ▶ Educational needs
- ▶ Cultural identity
- ▶ Sexuality/orientation



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## Wrap Up



- ▶ Review/summarize the information and key decisions
- ▶ Make a point to identify strengths and challenges in the service plan and new strategies
- ▶ Schedule the next visit
- ▶ Provide a written copy of agreements and future visit information to the child/youth

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## Child and Family Team Meetings

### THE CONTINUUM OF CARE REFORM

- ▶ A child or youth is required to have a CFT within the first 60 days of entering into the child welfare or probation foster care placement
- ▶ A CFT meeting held no less than once every 6 months
- ▶ For youth in placement who are receiving Intensive Care Coordination (ICC), Intensive Home-Based Services (IHBS), or Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC), a CFT meeting must occur at least every 90 days
- ▶ CFT meetings are another way to support the youth and family topics discussed at a visit may be brought to the CFT to process and develop next steps
- ▶ CFT meetings need to be documented in CWS/CMS



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## Envisioning Improved Outcomes

- Improved assessments of homes and placements
- Develop relationships
- Demonstrate problem solving skills
- Opportunity to integrate initiatives into daily practice (family finding, extended foster care, family and community engagement)
- Provide a community link to maintain the safety of the child/youth



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## Documentation



### Where to document

- CWS/CMS
- Probation database
- Court reports
- Case files

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## CWS/CMS Documentation

- Record in the **ORANGE** button section
- Detail narrative (narratives are required)
  - Context and setting
  - Efforts to explain permissions and youth's rights
  - Engagement strategies
  - Changes in safety threats and risk
  - Cultural, religious and ethnic considerations



- Progress and barriers in achieving case plan objectives
- Strengths and needs
- Current circumstances of family
- Family member perceptions
- Service needs and delivery
- Assessment and evaluation
- Follow-up/next steps

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## Documentation

- ▶ Contact with the parent, caregivers and the child/youth must be documented in CWS/CMS because it is a critical part of creating a written record of your work with a child/youth and family, ensuring compliance with Division 31 and other State and Federal requirements, and documenting reasonable services or active efforts.
- ▶ Remember, the whole story should be documented (calls, texts, and other collateral visits with the youth).
- ▶ As they say, "If it isn't documented, it didn't happen."
- ▶ Monthly face-to-face case contacts with youth must be entered into CWS/CMS by the last day of the month.

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## Review your Work



- ▶ Minimum frequency
- ▶ Majority of visits are in the residence of the child/youth
- ▶ Quality
- ▶ Are the right questions asked?
- ▶ Are assessments done?
- ▶ Is best practice occurring?

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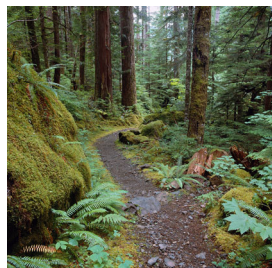
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*"The future is not one place we are going, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made. And the activities of making them changes the maker and the destination."*

John Shear  
UC Santa Cruz



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## Key Components from SB342 and WIC 16516.5/WIC 16516.6

- ▶ Minimum: Once per month
- ▶ Majority of visits (at least 50%) to occur in residence
  - ▶ If outside residence: must be documented in case file, CWS/CMS and court report detailing location of the visit and reason why it occurred outside the residence
  - ▶ No more than two consecutive monthly visits outside the residence
- ▶ Caseworker must advise child/youth of their right to request private discussion outside the residence
- ▶ Specific objectives are to be addressed during visits and documented, (monitoring safety of child/youth, assessing child/youth's well-being, monitoring education, health, and services and progress towards meeting case plan goals, assisting youth preserving and maintaining connections/religious and ethnic identity, etc.)

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## SB 342: An Act to Amend Sections WIC 16516.5 and 16516.6 effective Jan 1, 2014

- ▶ The visit shall include a private discussion between the foster child/youth and the caseworker
- ▶ The private discussion shall not be held in the presence or immediate vicinity of the resource parent/caregiver
- ▶ The caseworker shall advise the foster child/youth that he/she has the right to request the private discussion occur outside the residence (if so, this does not replace the visit in the residence)
- ▶ If the visit does not occur in the residence, the caseworker shall document in the case file and in the court report the location of the visit and the reason for the visit occurring outside the place of residence

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## SB 342: An Act to Amend Sections WIC 16516.5 and 16516.6 effective Jan 1, 2014

- ▶ The contents of the private discussion shall not be disclosed to the foster parent/caregiver, except under any of the following circumstances
- ▶ (1) The caseworker believes the foster child/youth may be in danger of harming himself or herself, or others
- ▶ (2) The caseworker believes that disclosure is necessary to meet the needs of the child/youth
- ▶ (3) The child/youth consents to disclosure of the information

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This curriculum was  
developed in collaboration  
with CDSS.

Thanks for joining us!

Questions?

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