Restoring Hope

2020 Annual Report
Special COVID-19 Edition
RESTORING HOPE TO VICTIMS OF ABUSE

During the abuse there was **FEAR**.

**FEAR** of being hurt to a point of being hospitalized.

I seek assistance because of the **FEAR** of going back home.

At **THE SAFE CENTER** I felt **SAFE** with my children.

I felt like the staff truly **CARED FOR** us and our **WELL BEING**.

I am very grateful for all the **HELP AND SUPPORT** I am receiving.

I feel like I can pick myself up and **STAND STRONG**

I would tell someone that **THE SAFE CENTER**

**IS THERE TO HELP** you get back on your feet.

Not to give up, but to **KEEP TRUSTING**

when it feels like there is no other way out.

...that **THINGS WILL GET BETTER**.

Safe Center Survivor
Agency counseling, advocacy, housing, and legal staff navigated the challenges of the pandemic to provide vital services to survivors and their families. **3,819** individuals impacted by Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Trafficking and/or Child Abuse were provided with either in-person or remote assistance.

Hotline staff responded to **5,363** domestic violence, **786** rape/sexual assault, and **46** human trafficking calls.

**1,670** individuals impacted by Domestic Violence were connected to The Safe Center via the police project.

The Human Trafficking Department served **145** minors who were identified as victims of date rape, interpersonal violence and/or children who are victims of sexual exploitation for monetary gain.

Rape/Sexual Assault Counselors kept regularly scheduled appointments with survivor clients and facilitated group sessions through phone and video counseling. **538** victims/survivors were provided with services.

By end of 2020, **199** children and **354** adult non-offending family members receiving Children’s Mental Health services were counseled via telehealth. **150** adult victims were served via the Adult Victim Advocate Program.

**85** clients were served by the Domestic Violence Coordinated Entry System and **20** adults, and **28** children were housed in the Rapid Rehousing Program. In addition, **86** adults received services of some kind. **99** individuals fleeing abusive home lives were safely housed at The Safe Home.

**525** Safe Center clients received legal services. Of those, agency Attorneys worked with **273** individuals and Court Advocates assisted **108** individuals.
MESSAGE FROM STEPHEN G. BONDI, BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Supporters,

As we continue to meet the challenges presented by the pandemic, there is no better time to extend our heartfelt appreciation to each of you whom have continued to provide support to The Safe Center in so many ways. Whether you financed delivery of meals to Safe Home residents and staff, collected and dropped off personal protective equipment to the agency, offered services in-kind, sponsored one of several virtual fundraising events, participated in our annual golf outing, or contributed in other ways, your commitment to the safety and healing of those most vulnerable to abuse was integral to the sustainability of agency operations during very unpredictable times.

In addition to providing critical services to adult and child victims of abuse, The Safe Center continued to look to the future and has invested its energy in enhancing agency operations including in the following ways:

♦ Held a press conference in March 2020 to launch the Capital Campaign to Build a Second Safe Home in Nassau County. To date, the agency has secured over $358,500 in pledges towards its goal of $3 million. Once the project is completed, The Safe Center will be operating an additional 15 bed shelter for victims of Domestic Violence in need of immediate safety with a potential of serving up to 75 more individuals each year.

♦ Took over certain programs and services of Child Abuse Preventive Services (CAPS) in July 2020. By including CAPS bullying and child abuse prevention programs with that of The Safe Center’s Professional and Community Educational programs, the agency’s outreach has been expanded to include primary school-aged children and teachers in both Nassau and Suffolk County communities. CAPS at The Safe Center will follow the CAPS program model and will continue to recruit and train volunteers that will present programs across Long Island.

♦ Formed an internal systemic racism work group in response to national current events surrounding the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. The objective of the work group is to educate board members, agency leadership, and staff on the intersection of systemic and implicit racism and interpersonal violence. The agency’s commitment to being part of the “solution” began with Erase Racism providing a series of trainings, beginning with agency leadership.

♦ The Board of Directors voted in 2 new members to The Safe Center Board of Directors in 2020 (Raymond Czajkowski and Bonnie Habyan) and presented 5 names for membership consideration for 2021.

We hope you are pleased with The Safe Center’s accomplishments as presented in this Annual Report and we wholeheartedly recognize each of you as fellow partners in the prevention of future incidences of abuse against any individual.

Stephen G. Bondi, Board President
MESSAGE FROM CYNTHIA G. SCOTT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

I hope each of you and your families are all safe and well. During the height of the pandemic, American families were asked to stay at home to protect themselves and their communities. Remote learning became the solution for making sure school-aged children did not fall behind. Protocols put in place were designed to keep each of us and our families safe. However, for many of our neighbors, the home was not “safe.”

Victims suddenly were sheltering at home with their abusers, they were unable to access community resources and support systems. The economic devastation worsened situations in homes where mistreatment and violence had been a problem and stimulated violence in families where it never existed before. Children who may have otherwise been identified as victims of abuse by teachers and counselors were left to suffer in silence.

During this difficult time for so many, The Safe Center was there.

- Hotline staff were available 24-7 and responded to 6,195 calls from victims of domestic violence, rape/sexual assault, and human trafficking.
- Sexual Assault First Emergency Responder (SAFER) advocates provided hospital support for 168 victims.
- The Child Advocacy Center remained operational and provided support to 560 child abuse cases and facilitated 200 forensic interviews of children.
- The Safe Home remained fully operational with no interruption of services to residents. Staff worked hard to educate clients about COVID-19 safety precautions.
- Remote teletherapy was incorporated by all Safe Center program areas to ensure victims and survivors receiving counseling, advocacy, and legal services could continue.
- Safe Center educators incorporated online workshop presentations and CEU trainings via Zoom and provided 601 trainings attended by 24,740 participants.

Please know that we could not have provided this level of support without your continued commitment to the work being done here each day. It is with great pride that we present The Safe Center’s 2020 Annual Report: Special COVID-19 Edition.

Cynthia G. Scott, Executive Director
BECAUSE OF YOU...

I realized how important it is to put my own feelings first and do what’s best for me.

That I can keep going even if life is keeping me down.

I know I have to try to find the positive and do good things for myself.

– Safe Home Resident and Domestic Violence Survivor
In the wake of New York State’s orders to shut down business in March 2020, crisis intervention, advocacy and counseling staff continued to come to the office every day to ensure that critical services for existing Safe Center client families and victims in need were not interrupted.

THROUGH THE HOTLINE (516.542.0404)

Hotline staff remained available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and continued to provide those in need of crisis intervention access to agency services. Emotional support and assistance, whether the caller sought information or expressed needs that required immediate action, were provided. As always, the safety of the caller is always a primary concern and confidential.

Towards the end of 2020, Hotline staff piloted a Text-to-Hotline program and Chat function on tscli.org for victims who are more comfortable reaching out via technology.

IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM

SAFER (Survivor Advocate for Emergency Response) Advocates transitioned services to phone support as the pandemic impacted the local emergency rooms. With the help of the hospital intake worker, victims were connected to the advocate who provided emotional support, information about the criminal justice process, and referrals, as needed.

SAFER Advocates never stopped assisting emergency room victims during 2020 and provided 168 hospital advocacy responses. Advocates are waiting for the go ahead as to when they can return to the hospitals to assist in-person.

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE POLICE

Through the Police Project, Nassau County Law Enforcement partners still connected victims of interpersonal violence to The Safe Center.

During the height of the pandemic, police project reports were still provided to Hotline Staff (despite limited access) so individuals could be connected to The Safe Center for services.
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES
With the varying levels of challenges experienced by Safe Center client families during COVID-19, counselors and advocates continued to keep regularly scheduled individual appointments as well as group sessions. Immediately after the shutdown, phone counseling connected clients to agency services. To provide an additional layer of confidentiality and connection for those survivors processing the trauma they experienced, teletherapy soon became another platform for counseling.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES TEAM FORMS RSA MDT AND EXPANDS COUNSELING SERVICES DURING COVID-19
During 2020, the Rape and Sexual Assault team, formed an RSA. Multi-disciplinary Team (RSA MDT). The MDT team brings internal departments at the agency together with the goal of working collaboratively to assist the adult survivor with all their advocacy, counseling, and case management needs. Housing assistance is reviewed as well, if applicable. The MDT approach ensures the survivor that they are receiving every possible service necessary for the healing journey.

In addition, group counseling available to victims of rape and/or sexual assault expanded to two women’s and two young adult support groups, and one college support group. Before the pandemic, trying to start a college support group was extremely challenging due to colleges limiting office space for only their own students.

ADULT VICTIM ADVOCATE ASSIST ELDERLY VICTIMS DURING HEIGHT OF PANDEMIC
In the early months of the pandemic, a member of the Adult Victim Advocate (AVA) team responded to a call to work with an elderly female who was sexually assaulted by a stranger. The victims had limited local support and was deeply impacted by the trauma inflicted by the attack. The Advocate responded by arranging to meet the victim to accompany her to an interview with Special Victims Unit detectives, providing emotional support, making sure concrete needs were met, and that safe housing with COVID safety protocols (wearing personal protective equipment and social distancing) was available. The victim expressed feeling supported and cared for during the crisis and remains in contact with her AVA months later as she moves forward with the next steps of the criminal justice process and healing journey.
SAFE HOME CONTINUES TO HOUSE VICTIMS AND THEIR CHILDREN DURING PANDEMIC

Keeping Safe Home counseling and support staff and the individuals in their care safe during the pandemic was one of many priorities for The Safe Center. A standard operating protocol was decided upon prior to the shutdown of all non-essential businesses. Implementation included the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for all living and working in the house, a quarantine area if someone was infected or exposed to the virus, social distancing rules, procedures for grocery deliveries and take-out food service, and accommodations for school-aged children participating in virtual learning. While individual and group counseling with licensed master level counselors continued either in-person or virtually during a client’s stay at the Safe Home, educating individuals and their children to understand the importance of staying at home and safety protocol while living in a group environment was key to ensuring the safety of everyone.

HOUSING DEPARTMENT WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST TO ASSIST SURVIVORS

Unemployment is a major barrier that victims of domestic violence face as they seek independence moving on from an abusive partner. Since there is a high demand for assistance in identifying employment opportunities, an Employment Specialist has been added to the Housing Department team.

The Specialist will assist clients with developing and enhancing their resumes, interviewing skills, posting resumes on employment websites, providing referrals to employment and vocational opportunities, and assistance with job retention.

With the added pressure of COVID-19, the Specialist provided calming and reassuring support and assistance by working with clients on resumes remotely via Zoom shared screens. This connection between the Specialist and client lifted stress, increased confidence, and left clients feeling empowered. All necessary for a successful job search.

Without the assistance of resume edits, I would not have obtained my job at the bank. Your guidance in how to dress for the interview and questions you suggested that I ask all helped me to get this job. Prior to your help, I was going on interviews and not getting calls back”.
—Housing Department Client
ADVOCATE, FORENSIC & DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS

During the pandemic, services to victims of child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence continued. New emergency protocols were implemented to ensure that coordination with multidisciplinary partners (law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical, and counseling) were able to continue collaborating to meet the needs of every victim.

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER WELCOMES NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FORENSIC SERVICES DURING COVID

The Child Advocacy Center also expanded the Forensics Program by adding an Assistant Director of Forensic Services to the team. This addition allows the agency to elevate the expertise of understanding of the child forensic interview process, enhance the collaboration with the multidisciplinary investigative partners, and increase the number of children receiving specialized forensic interviews.

CHILDREN’S PROGRAMS

When COVID-19 hit in March, the Children’s Mental Health (CMH) Team seriously questioned whether they could effectively shift the specialized services online, even for a brief period. Maintaining the commitment to using developmentally sensitive modalities, such as play therapy, from behind a computer screen, presented a new set of challenges. In response, the CMH team immediately shifted to high gear and quickly researched options and were trained in teleplay therapy so young clients could continue to receive high quality services. By the end of 2020, services provided were entirely through telehealth. Utilizing teleplay therapy required some creativity. As a result, interactive therapeutic games, designing digital doll houses and sand trays (minus the sand), creating home-made puppets and personal story books, etc. were incorporated. CHM counselors made repeated trips to clients’ homes to deliver art materials and play therapy supplies to ensure families had the supplies needed to participate in teletherapy sessions and support groups.

During 2020, increased enrollment for teletherapy was a welcomed surprise, likely due to the ease of participating at home. Clients also invited counselors into their world by providing virtual house tours, making introductions to their favorite stuffed animals that bring them comfort at night as well as family pets.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING & PREVENTION SERVICES

DEPARTMENT TEAM WORKS HARD TO OBTAIN, MAINTAIN, AND SUSTAIN LONG-TERM ABSTINENCE FROM VICTIMIZATION

The expertise and vision the new Director of Human Trafficking (HT) brings to The Safe Center will help to create new and innovative approaches to addressing issues and concerns that victims and survivors face.

In conjunction with providing the specialized supportive needs required by victims and survivors of trafficking, the agency has embarked on the journey of obtaining, maintaining, and sustaining long-term abstinence from victimization that trafficking has been known to create. Once a victim is removed from the situation and provided with stabilization services and life skills, they can begin the next phase towards building a better life. This includes working with the agency Employment Specialist to prepare for educational and/or employment opportunities that promote life changing self-sufficiency for the long-term.

Despite restrictions put in place due to the pandemic, access to 25 adult voluntary participants willing to receive services from The Safe Center was given to the agency’s HT team by the Nassau County Human Trafficking Intervention Court. Also, the Safe Center assisted the District Attorney’s office on numerous cases where victims were required to testify at Grand Jury against their trafficker. Assistance included client advocacy, counseling, referral services and in some cases, safe housing.

UJA-FEDERATION NY CONTINUES TO PROVIDE GENEROUS SUPPORT THROUGHOUT PANDEMIC

With continued assistance from UJA-Federation NY, over $90,000 in generous funding for Project Hope continued, despite the difficulty by so many to fundraise during COVID-19.

An additional $11,000 in funding was approved by the Evelyn Shapiro Trust (upon UJA-Federation NY’s recommendation) to support a Birthday Wishes Grant for the Safe Home and the Annual Youth Retreat, held at the Adventure Park Long Island.
BECAUSE OF YOU, HOPE WAS RESTORED

PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION STAFF OVERCOME UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES DURING PANDEMIC BY SHIFTING TO VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

To ensure the community was apprised of the dangers of abuse during the pandemic and beyond, the Education Department quickly adapted to offering virtual programming through Zoom. Every week throughout the pandemic, the Education Department offered at least 2-3 virtual workshops per week for the community. Throughout the year, our team of skilled educators presented virtual trainings to concerned community members, parents and young adults on issues related to child abuse, intimate partner abuse, human trafficking, and sexual violence. Virtual programming has proven beneficial in reaching more individuals than ever by providing the opportunity to gain knowledge from the comfort of their own homes. Partnering with local policy makers, school PTAs, community centers and places of worship has helped The Safe Center to successfully reach this goal. In addition, virtual conferences and workshops are now offered to professionals seeking CEUs in their field and a virtual tour of the agency was created and is available for viewing by those interested in learning more about The Safe Center’s programs and services.

INCREASED MEDIA PRESENCE

Local media relies on The Safe Center and the expertise of its educational team when dealing with important issues on sexual assault, family violence and trafficking. During the year, the Safe Center was featured in the media 56 times and staff was interviewed by News 12, CBS News, Fox 5, ABC, NPR, and print media such as Newsday and Anton Media Group.

*The agency’s social media presence also increased significantly across Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram platforms. Continuing to grow these platforms helped to further strengthen community relationships while appealing to a younger audience.*

LEGAL SERVICES CONTINUES TO REPRESENT CLIENTS DURING EVER CHANGING COURT PROTOCOL

The legal staff’s commitment to providing services to Safe Center clients in 2020 demonstrated how resilient, flexible, versatile, and resourceful one can be during difficult times. Agency attorneys continued to represent clients in “virtual court” and legal consultations were conducted via phone or video conferencing. Legal Q&As were also conducted via Zoom. When necessary, legal department staff made special arrangements to meet with clients in-person in a safe office environment.

During 2020, attorneys started to attend trainings focusing on trauma informed lawyering and paralegal staff obtained their notary public license and began the process of obtaining their partial accreditation from the Department of Justice (DOJ) to become immigration representatives.
COVID-19 “SAFER AT HOME” EVENTS

March 20, 2020: Governor Cuomo ordered all non-essential businesses to close statewide.

Planning Special Events during a pandemic is difficult at best. Especially when you are less than two weeks away from hosting the first of three scheduled fundraisers for the year.

However, within every challenge there exists opportunity. To meet budgeted fundraising goals, the Development Team tapped into their creative side and explored new and interesting event formats that would keep supporters engaged with the work of the agency. With help from Platinum Platypus Motion/Visual FX, Taste That Jazz and Every Home A Safe Home Gala shifted to virtual events with special segments from celebrities and survivor stories. The Swing for Hope Golf Outing shifted to a safe and fun day of golf for those that supported this event every year.

Comedian Wendy Liebman donated her time and talent to assist the Safe Center in planning and hosting the first Comedy in Comfort virtual comedy show fundraiser. Comedians Judy Gold, Cathy Ladman, and Brian Kiley joined Wendy in ensuring this event would be a success.

As a result, the “Safer At Home” events raised a net revenue of $182,000 for programs and services. Thank you to all who contributed, participated, and supported these efforts.
In-Kind Donations of Products and Services

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on so many of our supporters, the agency continued to collect in-kind donations of products and services from members of the Long Island community throughout the year. These donations which included personal protective equipment, baby care items, new clothing and homemade knitted items, bed linens, household and cleaning supplies, kitchen essentials, paper goods, toiletries, gift cards to local Target, Walmart & Stop and Shop stores, and even restaurant take-out meals to The Safe Home helped to offset expenses incurred to support client needs.

The agency is so grateful to so many individual supporters, neighboring local businesses, restaurants, and retail stores who thought of The Safe Center during the height of the pandemic. You are truly our Champions!

Island Harvest and Steel Equities Strengthen Commitment to Safe Center Client Needs

The Safe Center is very appreciative of the support Island Harvest provided during the pandemic to ensure clients received nutritional food and baby care items. Although the nonprofit has moved its’ Bethpage location to a larger Melville location, Island Harvest has agreed to continue to stock this satellite pantry specifically for Safe Center clients. This much needed resource will continue to be available for as long as it can be maintained by both agencies. On the average, the pantry serves approximately 14 individuals/families each month. As more client families begin returning to Bethpage to receive in-person services, that number is expected to increase.

The Safe Center is proud to recognize Island Harvest as a collaborative partner, Steel Equities for donating the pantry space, and the Hotline Staff for making sure all clients have access to the pantry.
The Safe Center currently operates the only 17-bed domestic violence shelter in Nassau County. That is the lowest per-capita number of beds for domestic violence victims in New York State. This lack of capacity means that each year hundreds of individuals and their families must be housed in other counties, potentially disrupting their connections to their families, their jobs, their children’s school, and their community.

With a commitment for support from the Nassau County Department of Social Services, The Safe Center launched a 3-year Capital Campaign to expand capacity of the Safe Home. On March 5, 2020, a press conference was held. County Executive Laura Curran, District Attorney Madeline Singas, Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder, and Elsie, a former Safe Home Resident joined Executive Director Cynthia Scott in presenting the need that will better serve victims and their families. It is expected that adding 15 beds for victims of domestic violence and their children will enable The Safe Center to house an additional 75 individuals per year.

During the height of the pandemic, the Safe Home remained operational at 90% capacity to accommodate cases of COVID if a resident or staff were infected.

Across the Island, those who were forced to quarantine with their abuser were at a higher risk of danger. The challenges and lessons learned in 2020 has further reinforced the The Safe Center’s commitment to the Capital Campaign so that victims of interpersonal violence have a safe place to heal during their journey to recovery.

2020 Contributors to Capital Campaign

The Family of Ilene Barshay ♦ Big Lots Foundation
♦ The Bondi Family ♦ Cronin & Cronin Law Firm
♦ The Davidson Family ♦ The Dejak Family
♦ Scott Douglas ♦ Susan and Leonard Feinstein
♦ Esther Fortunoff-Green ♦ GoCampusing.com
♦ The Honorable Marilyn Genoa, Esq. ♦ The Glick Family Foundation
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♦ The Razozzino Family ♦ Realtyconnect.com
♦ Susan Ring and Joseph Pellicano ♦ Evelyn Shapiro Trust ♦ Charles Waters and Sarah Skeist
♦ The Whitley Family ♦ The Zuccaro Family

Visit tsclisafehomes.org for more information.
SAFE CENTER CHAMPIONS AND SUPPORTERS
January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

ASSOCIATIONS, FOUNDATIONS AND CHARITABLE FUNDS


BUSINESSES AND CORPORATIONS

INDIVIDUALS


GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Freeport Community Development Corp. ♦ Legislative Grants from Members of the New York State Senate and Assembly who Represent Nassau and Suffolk Counties ♦ Nassau County District Attorney’s Office ♦ Nassau County Department of Housing ♦ Nassau County Department of Social Services ♦ Nassau County Police Department ♦ Nassau County Youth Board ♦ New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault ♦ New York State Department of Health ♦ New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services ♦ New York State Office of Children and Family Services ♦ New York State Office of Court Administration ♦ New York State Office of Victim Services ♦ United States Department of Federal Housing and Urban Development

Subcontracted Awards From: Central Nassau Guidance and Counseling Services, Inc. ♦ Community Voices ♦ Family and Children’s Association ♦ Lifespan ♦ The Retreat, Inc.

Message to all Safe Center Champions and Supporters

Administrative staff work very hard to present a complete listing of all who make both monetary and in-kind donations in support of The Safe Center’s programs and services. The listing of association, corporate, foundation and individual donors include those who have contributed either a monetary amount or in-kind donation valued at $500 or more in the 2020 calendar year. The Safe Center apologizes if an acknowledgment of support was inadvertently missed and extends its heartfelt appreciation to each of you who had provided support at any level. Support provided by Safe Center Champions is invaluable. Thank you for being an important part of The Safe Center family.
THE 2020 SAFE CENTER TEAM

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STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Employees and volunteers of The Safe Center work tirelessly to ensure that adult and child victims of abuse and their non-offending family members are safe, receive the necessary services to heal from abuse without shame, and restore hope for a better future. Staff members include attorneys, counselors, social workers, advocates, educators, program interns, and administrative personnel, many of whom are bilingual service providers. The Safe Center requires new staff to attend educational trainings that provide an overview of the types of abuses addressed by the agency including child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse, rape and sexual assault, and human trafficking. Our volunteers are compassionate individuals from all walks of life who train to provide support to those in need, and to aid in the work of The Safe Center.
MISSION
To protect, assist and empower victims of family violence and sexual assault while challenging and changing social systems that tolerate and perpetuate abuse.

VISION
To Restore Hope for Victims of Abuse

APPROACH
Due to the visionary leadership of Executive Director, Cindy Scott, and The Board of Directors, The Safe Center has become a beacon of hope within Nassau County and surrounding communities that provides a fast and easy path to resources that assist in saving and changing lives of women, men, children and elderly victims of family violence and sexual abuse. The Safe Center addresses the impact of abuse on victims as well as their families so that cycles of abuse can end. Services are free of charge, bilingual and confidential.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY
Services provided by The Safe Center are available free of charge, for all persons regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, military status, marital status, disability, or age. The Safe Center welcomes everyone and works hard to overcome each victim’s unique barriers to safety.

“Out of a mountain of despair, a stone of hope”
—Martin Luther King, Jr.
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