

Getting off to a *Healthy Start*



A NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL HEALTHY START ASSOCIATION, INC.

Spring 2004

Spring Conference to Focus on Leadership and Sustainability

The NHSA's Fifth Annual Spring Education Conference, *Healthy Start: Leadership & Sustainability – Building for the Future*, will be held in Washington, DC on April 19–21, 2004. The program is expanded this year by a half-day, and includes information on leadership development, utilization of evaluation techniques for sustainability and advocacy and addressing emerging trends.

Highlights include:

- Three tracks for Consumers/Consortia Leaders, Project Directors and Program Staff
- Keynote speech by Tamara Lucas Copeland, president of Voices for America's Children

- The documentary film, "Bringing in Da Spirit," about the African American midwifery movement
- A session led by Dr. Ira J. Chasnoff of the Children's Research Triangle in Chicago on "Systems Integration – What Does It Mean for Program Staff?"
- Chance to apply for grants from The What To Expect Foundation for "Baby Basics" training and materials
- Congressional Reception on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, April 20th, sponsored by Navigant Consulting
- And much more!

For a complete preliminary agenda, visit the NHSA website and click the Information for Members link.

Regional Conferences Underway

As this issue of *Getting off to a Healthy Start* goes to press, one NHSA Regional Conference was just held on March 15 and 16 in Phoenix, Arizona. The conference was attended by the Healthy Start projects from the western states and Hawaii. The next conference for the Southeast region will be held in Atlanta, March 25 and 26.

The regional conferences are underwritten using the NHSA's Congressional earmark, and provide technical assistance to Healthy Start staff and consumers. Additionally, the conferences will assess technical assistance needs; develop a response to those needs, including a peer-to-peer mentoring system; foster relationships between Healthy Start and Title V; and obtain feedback on the NHSA's toolkits for final revisions.

Phoenix Conference Enjoys Varied Program

The Phoenix conference chose three toolkits: Evaluating Success, Financial Sustainability and Program Excel-

lence. The 60 attendees also heard a presentation by Neil Tift of the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families on involving fathers in the Healthy Start model. Sandy Tomiyama and Janell Lai-Lubwana, of the Hawaii Healthy Start project, presented on a community-wide health education model, along with board member Jerry Roberson, who showcased Fort Worth Healthy Start's education model. The panelists for the Consumers in Action session included Rhonda Jordan and Earlene Paschel of Shields for Families Healthy Start in Compton, California and Jennifer Lunt of the Family Foundations project in Medford, Oregon. Ginger Harrell, project director of the Healthy Start program in Aurora, Colorado, and Jerry Roberson facilitated the Healthy Start/Title V session.

This conference was the culmination of months of hard work by "Planning Team 6" and the NHSA thanks

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Belinda Pettiford (02-05), President
Healthy Start Eastern, Northeastern and
Triad Baby Love Plus (NC)

Kenn Harris (02-05), Vice President
(Former Project Director)
New Haven Healthy Start (CT)

Jonah O. Garcia (03-06), Secretary and Chair
Membership Services Committee
Doña Ana Healthy Start (NM)

Jerry Roberson (03-06), Treasurer
Texas Healthy Start Alliance (TX)

Carol A. Synkewecz (02-05), Past President
Duvall County Health Department/
Administration—MCH (FL)

Cynthia Dean (02-05), Co-Chair
Development Committee
Missouri Bootheel Healthy Start, Sikeston (MO)

Deborah Frazier (former Board Member), Co-Chair
Development Committee
Arkansas Health Services Permit Agency (AR)

Madie Robinson (02-05), Chair
Evaluation & Outcomes Committee
Pee Dee Healthy Start, Florence (SC)

C. Michael Savage (02-05), Chair
Sustainability Committee
Westside Healthy Start, Chicago (IL)

Yvonne Beasley (04-07)
Indianapolis Healthy Start (IN)

Estrellita "Lo" Berry (03-06)
Central Hillsborough Healthy Start, Tampa (FL)

Pamela Bryer (03-06)
Healthy Start for Chester County (PA)

Dianna Christmas (02-05)
Boston Healthy Start Initiative (MA)

Mario Drummonds (03-06)
Central Harlem Healthy Start (NY)

Cindi Garcia (03-06)
Healthy Start Laredo (TX)

Rick Haverkate (04-07)
Maajtaag Mnobmaadzid, "A Start of a
Healthy Life," Sault Ste. Marie (MI)

Clarice Lowe (03-06)
VNS Healthy Start, Des Moines (IA)

Patricia McManus (02-05)
Milwaukee Healthy Beginnings Project (WI)

Tamela Milan (04-07)
Westside Healthy Start, Chicago (IL)

Karen Owes
Central Harlem Healthy Start (NY)

Wilford A. Payne (03-06)
Healthy Start Allegheny County/
Fayette County (PA)

Carlton L. Purvis, III
Family Foundations, Medford (OR)

Peter Schafer (03-06)
Baltimore City Healthy Start (MD)

Danetta Taylor (03-06)
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Oakland (CA)

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The National Healthy Start Association, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Its mission is to promote the development of community-based maternal and child health programs, particularly those initiatives addressing the issues of infant mortality, low birthweight and racial disparity.

Educating Your Members of Congress: Getting Ready for the Spring Conference

How to Empower Your Advocacy Voice for Healthy Start

For most Healthy Start programs, the main source of funding is their federal grant. Since funding allocated to federal programs is under annual review by Congress through the appropriations process, it stands to reason that educating congressional lawmakers about Healthy Start is crucial to sustaining its funding. It is important to know that if you are a constituent you have a voice. Your voice is your vote. However, many citizens do not know the basic steps in communicating with their congressional representatives.

Lawmakers are people, and cannot know about your work if you do not make an attempt to meet with them and educate them about it. Here are some tips about effective advocacy and how to ensure that your elected officials serving in Washington are aware of the work you are doing locally, or how the work of Healthy Start has improved your lives and the lives of your children.

To find out who represents you in Congress, what committees they serve on and what issues they care about, log onto the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate websites at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov. Both sites have simple and clear instructions to enable you to easily find your Representatives and U.S. Senators by using your zip code.

Members of Congress are Stakeholders in Healthy Start

Your local Members of Congress should be considered stakeholders in the work of Healthy Start. As such, you are responsible for developing a relationship with them and with their staff so that they identify you as local constituents, whether you are working in the program or are clients who are benefiting from the services provided. Relationships require attention, and here are some simple steps to follow to build relationships with your elected officials:

- 1) Reach out to the staff of your Members of Congress. Maintaining communication with the professional staff responsible for serving them in both the local district offices and at the Capitol in Washington enables them to know you.

Sent in Your Registration Forms? Made Your Hotel Reservations Yet?

Visit the NHSA website and click the Information for Members link for information and registration materials for these NHSA conferences:

March 25–26	Southeast Regional Conference	Atlanta, GA
April 19–21	Fifth Annual Spring Education Conference	Washington, DC
May 7–8	Midwest Regional Conference	Chicago, IL
May 24–25	East Regional Conference	Morgantown, WV
June 3–4	Northeast Regional Conference	Newark, NJ
June 22–23	Southwest Regional Conference	San Antonio, TX

- 2) Take the time to schedule a meeting with your lawmakers. You can do this whenever you plan a trip to Washington, especially if Congress is in session. Lawmakers usually enjoy a visit from their constituents and make time to see them. You can check the schedules for Congress by logging onto the House and Senate websites, or by contacting the lawmaker's local district office.
- 3) Invite your congressional members to visit your project, especially when you are planning a special event where other members of the community are invited. Nothing can substitute for the impact a personal visit can make to see what is actually involved in the work of Healthy Start.
- 4) If you manage a Healthy Start project, obtain a commitment from your local consortium members and other key local stakeholders in the community (neighbors, clients, hospitals, churches, social services) that they will communicate their support for the Healthy Start Program when Congress annually reviews federal funding levels.
- 5) Healthy Start clients and consumers offer unique assistance by being able to express how the program has benefited them personally. Stories about what Healthy Start has done for a person or a community shows the lawmakers that public investment in the program works.
- 6) Share your success stories and communicate them to your lawmakers in any way you can. When you host special events to celebrate a program milestone, include your lawmakers, especially when local media will be present. Credit for your success will be rewarded in Washington.
- 7) Provide an annual "report card" to your Member of Congress that includes educational materials and statistics on your project and how it is affecting the well-being of their constituents. These materials are helpful to lawmakers and staff when they wish to send letters of support on your behalf, or wish to make a supportive statement on the floor of the House or Senate.
- 8) When you are writing grants for federal proposals, whether for your traditional Healthy Start program or other related programs, be sure to ask for and include letters of support from your lawmakers. If you have already established a relationship with your congressional representatives, you will find this to be a very easy and effective tool.

How to Schedule and Prepare to Meet with Members of Congress

The following tips are provided courtesy of *Congress at Your Fingertips*, a publication widely used by advocates in Washington:

Plan Your Visit Carefully: Be clear about what you want to achieve; determine in advance which member or committee staff you need to meet with to achieve your purpose.

Make An Appointment: When attempting to meet with a member, contact the Appointment Secretary/Scheduler. Explain your purpose and who you represent. It is easier for congressional staff to arrange a meeting if they know what you wish to discuss and your relationship to the area or interests represented by the member.

Be Prompt and Patient: When it is time to meet with a member, be punctual and be patient. It is not uncommon for a lawmaker to be late, or to have a meeting interrupted due to the member's crowded schedule. If interruptions do occur, be flexible. When the opportunity presents itself, continue your meeting with a member's staff.

Be Prepared: Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position. Members are required to take positions on many different issues. In some instances, a member may lack important details about the pros and cons of a particular matter. It is therefore helpful to share with the member information and examples that demonstrate clearly the impact or benefits associated with a particular piece of legislation.

Be Political: Members of Congress want to represent the best interests of their district or state. Whenever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of a member's constituency. If possible, describe for the member how you or your group can be of assistance to him/her. When it is appropriate, remember to ask for a commitment.

Be Responsive: Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information in the event a member expresses interest or asks questions. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter that outlines the different points covered during the meeting, and send along any additional information and materials requested.

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Report on 2004 Congress

President's Budget

On February 2nd, President Bush released his fiscal year 2005 Budget that keeps both the state Title V maternal and child health block grant and the Healthy Start program at virtually the same amounts as last year. The Title V program is recommended at \$730 million and Healthy Start is recommended at \$98 million. This is comparatively good news, given that the Administration has trimmed many other programs in light of increasing federal deficits. Congress will take the President's budget under consideration during the forthcoming annual Labor HHS and Education appropriations process.

Senate Majority Leader Frist Introduces "Closing the Health Care Gap Act"

In 2000, Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) sponsored legislation that expanded research and education on the factors that contribute to health care disparities through a new office of Minority Health and Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In his effort to continue addressing these issues, Senator Frist was recently joined by other Senators that include Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Mike DeWine (R-OH) in introducing legislation. This legislation is intended to (1) improve the quality of data on health care; (2) expand access to quality health care through access and awareness grants that are community based; (3) encourage strong national leadership, cooperation and coordination, via the Office of Minority

Health, which would be formally authorized and expanded; (4) encourage increases in professional education, awareness and training in diversity and cultural sensitivity; and (5) enhance research on racial and ethnic disparities.

March of Dimes Spearheads Legislative Effort on Premature Births

As part of their recent Prematurity Campaign, the March of Dimes is spearheading efforts in Congress to address prematurity and low birthweight. S. 1726 and H.R. 3350, sponsored by Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Chris Dodd (D-CT) and Representatives Fred Upton (R-MI) and Anna Eshoo (R-CA), respectively. These bills focus on expanding research "into the causes and prevention of prematurity and to increase education and support services related to prematurity." This legislation is titled The Prematurity Research Expansion and Education for Mothers who deliver Infants Early or "PREEMIE Act." The second set of bills, S. 1734 and H.R. 3293, sponsored by Senators Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Representative Diana DeGette respectively, would "provide states increased flexibility and federal resources to expand access to family planning and maternity care for income-eligible women and increased access to health coverage for infants and children with special health care needs." The National Healthy Start Association supports the legislation listed in this report and will keep you informed of developments as the bills work their way through Congress.

Toolkits Almost Complete

The four toolkits currently under production (see the Winter 2003 issue of *Getting off to a Healthy Start*) are being utilized in the six regional conferences to provide technical assistance and skill building, as well as to obtain feedback from conference participants. Conferees

will be surveyed about the overall usefulness of each toolkit and will be asked what would make each one better. After this information is compiled, the NHSA will make final revisions and publish the toolkits for distribution to NHSA members during the summer.

Board Approves Newsletter Submission Guidelines

In a recent meeting, the NHSA board approved a recommendation from the Membership Services Committee to accept submissions from member projects for articles to be included in *Getting off to a Healthy Start*. Deadlines for submission are the first of February,

May, August and November. Submissions should be sent electronically and be no more than 500 words in length. For the complete set of guidelines, visit our website at www.healthystartassoc.org and click the Membership/Newsletter link.

Texas Healthy Start Alliance Holds Conference, Honors Tom Wells

Last year, the Healthy Start projects in the state of Texas – Brownsville, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Laredo and San Antonio – became known and incorporated as the Texas Healthy Start Alliance (TXHSA). TXHSA is committed to ensuring that the key features of the Healthy Start models are strengthened and promoted throughout the state of Texas. TXHSA strives to provide leadership and work in partnership with all reputable entities to strengthen the maternal and child health infrastructure, assure the availability and use of medical homes and build the knowledge and human resources in order to assure continued improvement in the health, safety and well being of the MCH population.

A hallmark event for the Alliance was the Texas Healthy Start Alliance/Texas Department of Health (TDH) Title V Second Annual Education Conference held on January 23, 2004. The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District sponsored the day-long conference in San Antonio. In addition, the March of Dimes, San Antonio Division, supported this event. The conference, *Working Together to Prevent Preterm Births*, provided participants with an overview of prematurity and specific training on related topics. A representative of each Healthy Start site and one from TDH comprised the planning committee. There were a total of 105 participants; 47 from Texas Healthy Start sites, while the remainder were professionals from San Antonio and surrounding areas. Presentations that were well received by the participants included “Coping with the Loss of a Pregnancy,”

“First-hand Experience with Prematurity” and “Bringing the Message Home.”

TXHSA honored Tom Wells, M.D., M.P.H., at the conference. Wells is the former Regional Program Consultant and Associate Field Director for MCH in the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Dallas Field Office. The members of TXHSA found it befitting to give tribute to Dr. Wells at this conference before his retirement this summer. Dr. Wells has provided his knowledge and expertise to the Texas Healthy Start projects and has been very instrumental in the development of the Alliance during his tenure with HRSA. Frank Cantu, his supervisor, and other colleagues from the HRSA Dallas Field office were invited to attend the commemorative presentation. Members of the Alliance offered words of appreciation to Dr. Wells for his continuous commitment to the Texas Healthy Start projects. A mother and child sculpture symbolizing his work in the MCH field and a slide show presentation, including pictures of Texas Healthy Start staff and clients, were presented to Dr. Wells on behalf of the Alliance.

The site for the Third Annual Education Conference will be Dallas/Fort Worth in January 2005. TXHSA values the partnership that it has established with the TDH Title V Program and other agencies and is committed to promoting cooperation, integration and dissemination of information with statewide systems and with other community services funded under the MCH Block Grant.

Regional Conferences, continued on page 1

those involved for their commitment and support, including everyone at South Phoenix Healthy Start who made things go so smoothly.

A unique component of the upcoming conference in Atlanta is that the planning team decided to use some of the time to prepare consumers for the NHSA's Spring Education Conference in Washington next month. We'll report on this conference, as well as those in May, in the next issue.

Beginnings Guides Available at Discounted Prices to NHSA Members

NHSA members receive a discount on orders of the *Beginnings Guides'* “Pregnancy Guide” and “The New Parent's Guide.” The special price is available at any time, rather than during particular order cycles. Practice Development, Inc., the publishers, makes a donation to the Association based on member orders. For more information about the *Guides*, visit www.BeginningsGuides.net.

Research News and Healthy Start

Infant Mortality Rose in 2002

The U.S. infant mortality has climbed for the first time in more than four decades. The nation's infant mortality rate (IMR) climbed from 6.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2001 to 7.0 deaths per 1,000 in 2002. "We were surprised because it has been declining fairly steadily for more than four decades," said Joyce Martin, lead statistician for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which released the report in February. "You're always concerned when an important indicator in public health increases." Among the reasons cited in the report were complications associated with older women putting off motherhood and then having multiple babies with the help of fertility drugs.⁽¹⁾ However, Kathy Buckley of the National Fetal and Infant Mortality Review program says, "It may be that the reasons CDC gives for the increase are entirely correct and are related to the older age of mother or fertility treatments resulting in multiple low birth-weight (LBW) births – but the increase in infant mortality may also point to the declining status of the U.S. economy, under or unemployment, lack of adequate health insurance, increased pollution of our air and water and then finally, the declining health and well being of childbearing families."⁽²⁾

A *Baltimore Sun* article reporting the increase noted that Maryland bucked the national trend, as did Baltimore, where last summer health officials announced the lowest infant mortality rate in the city's history, from 11.9 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2001 to 10.4 deaths in 2002. For the first time last year, infant mortality among African Americans in Baltimore dropped below the national average for blacks, from 14.8 deaths per 1,000 births in 2001 to 14.3 last year. Historically, mortality among black infants is higher than among white ones. Because infant mortality has many causes – drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes and high blood pressure, among others – experts see the reduced mortality rate as a bellwether. "It is the most important statistic about the health of a general population because so much has to go into lowering it," said Baltimore City Health Commissioner Peter L. Beilenson. He credited home visits to women with health risks as one factor that has helped to reduce the city's infant mortality.⁽³⁾ "The home visiting program is carried out by Baltimore City Healthy Start and the

City's Maternal & Infant Nursing program," said Peter Schafer, Healthy Start project director.⁽⁴⁾

According to an annual report from the National Center for Health Statistics and the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, "Racial differences in infant mortality remain a major public health concern. The role of LBW in infant mortality remains a major issue. New Hampshire, Utah and Massachusetts had the lowest IMRs. State-by-state differences in IMR reflect racial composition, the percentage of LBW and birth-weight-specific neonatal mortality rates for each state. The United States continues to rank poorly in international comparisons of infant mortality."⁽⁵⁾

(1) *Baltimore Sun*, February 12, 2003, p. 6A.

(2) Buckley, K., email communication to the NFIMR listserv, February 12, 2004.

(3) *Baltimore Sun*, op cit.

(4) Schafer, P. email communication to NHSA, February 12, 2004.

(5) Arias E et al. Annual Summary of Vital Statistics-2002. *Pediatrics*, Vol. 112, No. 6. December 2003, pp. 1215-1230.

DC's Healthy Start Program Makes Inroads on Infant Mortality

The Healthy Start program in Washington, DC is helping to sharply reduce infant mortality. The infant mortality rate for the majority-black city dropped to 10.6 per 1,000 live births in 2001 from 18.3 in 1992, the year the Healthy Start program began. In three of the four wards in which the program operates – the poorest in the city – there has been marked progress. The rates in those wards in 2001 ranged from 14.0-23.1 per 1,000 compared with a range of 16.3-20.2 in 1992. "We can't take all the credit for improvement but we're sure we're doing a lot of things right," says Diane Davis, project director for the District of Columbia Healthy Start program.

"The focus is on early intervention and there is an effort to reach women before they get pregnant. Much emphasis is also placed on changing unhealthy lifestyles," says Davis. "We want the women to gain control over their own health," she explains. "There is an effort to get the fathers involved," she adds, "but only 15-25% actually do so. About 60% of women who begin the program remain for the full two years of eligibility."

Healthcare Disparities Report, January 2004, p. 7.

Did You Know?

- Hispanic women are 1.6 times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes?
- Black women in the U.S. are four times more likely than white women to die from pregnancy-related causes?
- The most common pregnancy-related complications include: ectopic pregnancy, high blood pressure, complicated delivery, premature labor, depression, infection, diabetes and hemorrhage?
- From 1991–1999, more than 4,000 U.S. women died from pregnancy-related causes?

White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood, Mother's Day Flyer, 2004.

Mother's Day – May 9, 2004

Join the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood to celebrate mothers and raise awareness about the importance of maternal health in the U.S. Go to www.whiteribbonalliance.org for more information.

Consultant News

The NHSA recently contracted with Geri Lynn Peak of Two Gems Consulting to be the evaluator for the regional conferences. Peak was the lead writer for the Evaluating Success toolkit and has been associated with Baltimore City Healthy Start for a number of years.

Bea Haskins was offered the title of Operations Manager and accepted. She has been with NHSA since its inception. Her duties remain the same and include staffing the Membership Services/Spring Conference Planning Committee and Finance Committee and managing the day-to-day affairs of the NHSA. Along with consultant Claudia Morris, she co-staffs the regional conference planning teams.

Chambers Associates, the NHSA's government relations firm in Washington, DC, has assumed its parent company's name of Navigant Consulting. NHSA members will continue to work with Jan Denton, Bill Signer and Magi Swartz at Navigant Consulting.

BECOME A FRIEND OF HEALTHY START!

The NHSA depends on contributions from supporters, as well as members. If you would like to become a Friend of Healthy Start, please complete the form below and send it today with your check.

I/we want to be a Friend of Healthy Start and enclose a check to National Healthy Start Association, Inc.

- \$ 25 Individual
- \$ 50 Community-based organizations; local businesses and corporations
- \$ 100 State or regional organizations, businesses or corporations
- \$ 200 National organizations, businesses or corporations
- Additional contribution enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Company Name _____

Address _____

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E-mail _____

Please return this form with your check to: National Healthy Start Association, Inc., P.O. Box 25227, Baltimore, MD 21229-0327.

The National Healthy Start Association, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Consult your tax advisor.

Copies of NHSA's annual financial report may be obtained by writing to National Healthy Start Association, Inc., P.O. Box 25227, Baltimore, MD 21229-0327.

Documents and information filed under the Maryland charitable organization laws can be obtained, for the cost of copies and postage, from the Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401, (800) 825-4510 (for residents of Maryland).

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Importance of Leaving Information Behind

Members of Congress, or their staff persons, meet with many people during the course of each day. It is therefore important that you prepare packets to “leave behind” so they can review them and have on file for future reference.

Good materials can include:

- A map of your project area. This will clearly show your elected official where you fit into his/her district.
- Statistics that provide solid information about why Healthy Start needs your legislator’s support. Keep it succinct. For example, show how your infant mortality rate has dropped under Healthy Start, how many women accessed early prenatal care compared to before Healthy Start came to your community or how many pregnant moms stopped smoking.

- Clear photocopies of print media about your project, e.g., news articles where your project is favorably mentioned or a report on an event.
- Project’s brochure, “fact sheet” or other standard materials you use to inform about your program.
- Success stories, which are the most powerful evidence that your lawmaker is supporting a program that works.

Save the Date

Third Annual
Black Midwives and Healers Conference
Ancient Traditions, Sustainable Future

October 15–17, 2004
Portland, Oregon
www.blackmidwives.org



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