



# THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES:

USING FAFSA DATA TO SECURE TODAY'S STUDENTS' BASIC NEEDS

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# Introduction

Postsecondary credentials are a good investment for individuals, families, and communities. Yet college is more expensive than ever and financial aid has not kept pace. And, as college costs continue to grow, students still need to meet their basic needs, such as food, housing, and child care. Ensuring students' needs are met is critical to postsecondary success. Basic needs insecurity adversely affects students' well-being, as well as their college persistence and completion. Research shows that food and housing insecurity are contributing factors to lower graduation rates.<sup>1</sup> Higher education funding alone is not enough to meet those needs.

Today's Pell Grant maximum award remains at a level similar to Fiscal Year (FY) 1978, after adjusting for inflation. In 2022-23, the maximum Pell Grant covered 63% of average published in-state tuition and fees and 30% of average tuition, fees, room, and board at public four-year colleges and universities,<sup>2</sup> while it covered more than three-quarters of those costs in 1975. States have also disinvested in higher education, all while federal student loan limits haven't increased since 2008.

## THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Recent national data show:

**23%**

of undergraduate students experienced food insecurity



**8%**

of undergraduates experienced homelessness



**31%**

of Pell recipients face food insecurity



Basic needs insecurity affects

**35%**

of Black students

**30%**

of Native American students

**25%**

of Hispanic and Latino students.<sup>3</sup>





One solution is to ensure students access all available financial support, including means-tested public benefits such as SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), subsidized health insurance, broadband assistance, and tax credits. Millions of college students are eligible for such benefits, however, they are unaware of their eligibility or do not know how to apply. For instance, roughly 2 million students who are eligible for SNAP do not participate, leaving around \$3 billion in benefits on the table.<sup>4</sup> The combination of need-based financial aid and enrollment in means-tested programs could help increase student graduation rates for students with low incomes who may be juggling a mix of work, school, and family responsibilities.

**Combining a Pell Grant with other assistance can double a student's financial support for college.**



**Unmarried student**

	\$8,500 from other benefits
+	\$6,895 from Pell
<hr/>	
	\$15,400/year

**Parenting student with one child**

	\$15,000 from other benefits
+	\$6,895 from Pell
<hr/>	
	\$21,900/year

**Other benefits:**

- Average SNAP amount
- Medicaid
- Affordable Connectivity Program
- For parenting students, also includes average CHIP and WIC values

*Source: Benefits Data Trust*

## TACKLING BASIC NEEDS INSECURITIES WITH FAFSA DATA

Higher Learning Advocates (HLA) and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) conducted research on how institutions of higher education (IHEs) are using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data to alert students of their potential eligibility for benefits. The new survey research, presented throughout this brief, followed the Department of Education's (ED's) effort to address students' basic needs insecurity in January 2022.

In 2022, ED encouraged IHEs to connect students to means-tested benefits. Using Dear Colleague Letter GEN-22-02 (the DCL) issued by The Office of Federal Student Aid to IHEs, ED addressed how FAFSA data could be used to inform students of their potential eligibility for means-tested benefits. Based on COVID-era federal legislation, the DCL notes that IHEs may provide information specifically about SNAP, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), health insurance enrollment through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid, and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). The DCL also urges IHEs to engage in broad outreach, without using FAFSA data, about Unemployment Insurance and housing assistance. In the DCL, ED encourages IHEs to coordinate with a range of campus stakeholders, such as financial aid administrators, student organizations, faculty and staff advisors, or student life groups, to broadly inform students about the range of benefits for which they could be eligible.

### What's a Dear Colleague Letter? (DCL)

The Department of Education issues Dear Colleague Letters to communicate guidance and interpretation of regulation with institutions of higher education and other stakeholders. DCLs are supplementary to legislation and regulation.





# A Survey of Institutions: Are They Conducting Outreach to Students?

The DCL holds great potential as a means to connect students to the public benefits that address a range of basic needs — from food to broadband. But it only fulfills that potential if the schools use their FAFSA data as ED lays out in the DCL. **Over a year after the DCL was issued we decided to find out if colleges were using FAFSA data to identify and inform students who might be eligible for benefits and, if so, what the outreach looked like.**

## Survey Methodology

Since financial aid administrators are the primary campus-based holders of FAFSA data, HLA worked with NASFAA to administer a survey of financial aid administrators to determine how widely they are using FAFSA data to alert students of their potential eligibility for SNAP, ACP, health insurance, and the CTC, as well as other programs. HLA also conducted interviews with institutions that conduct outreach on means-tested public benefits, including aid administrators, basic needs center directors, and others to learn about how IHEs are using their FAFSA data.

On March 6, 2023, NASFAA distributed an electronic survey to the 2,638 primary contacts at its member institutions. When the survey closed on March 20, 2023, there were 275 completed surveys submitted and 84 surveys with at least one response, for a total of 359 surveys or 13% response rate.

“**Students are failing out of college due to a lack of support and basic needs. People are not thinking holistically.**”

– Linda Williams, Financial Aid Administrator, Sierra College (CA)

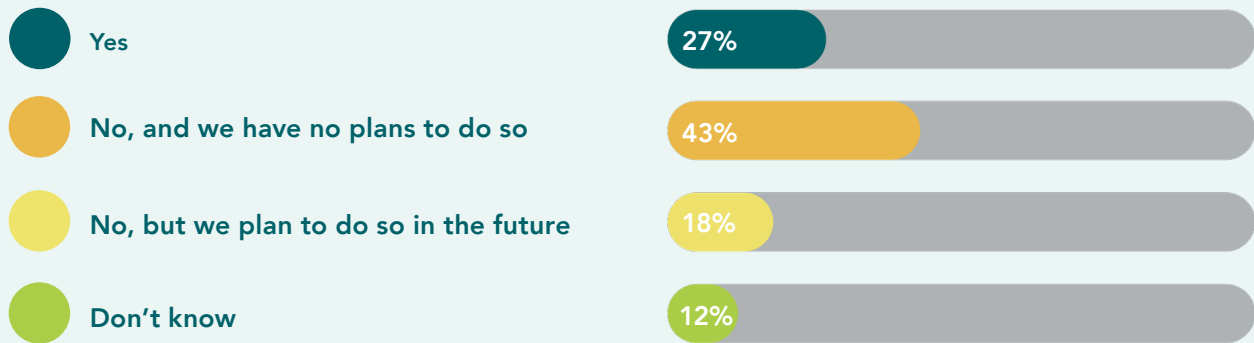


## Finding 1: Only one-quarter of institutions are conducting direct outreach — with or without — using FAFSA data

The survey showed just over one-quarter of respondents noted their IHE is currently conducting direct outreach to students about any federal benefit programs with or without using FAFSA data, and an additional 18% have plans to do so. Forty-three percent do not do direct outreach and have no plans of doing so.

Of those that reported they conduct direct outreach, the outreach was primarily conducted by the financial aid office, either alone (46%) or in coordination with another office (34%).

### Institutions providing direct outreach with FAFSA data, by means tested program



### What data does the FAFSA offer?

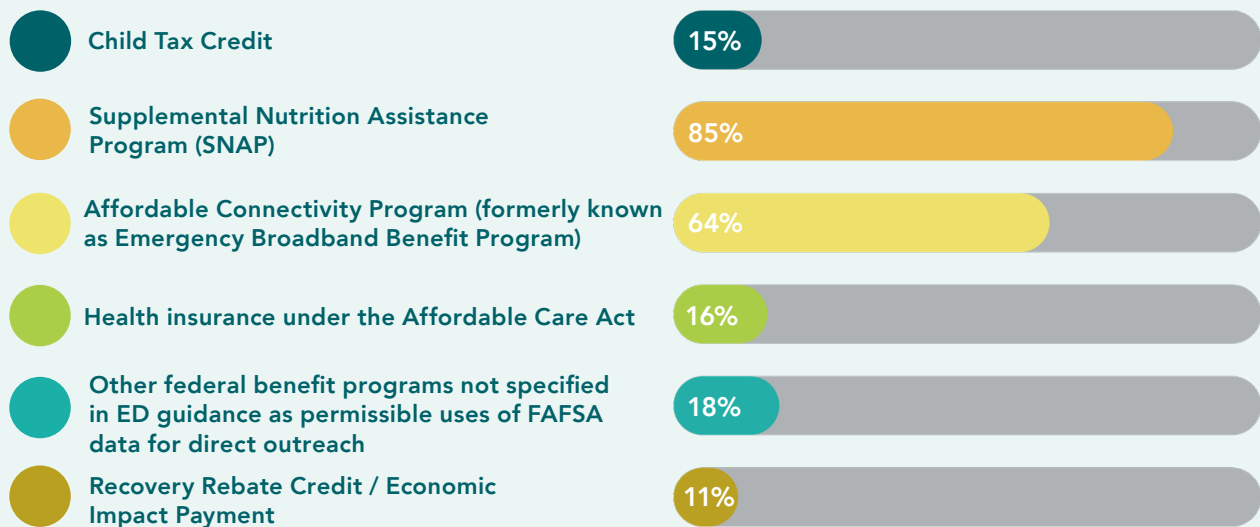
**Direct items:** Using data that directly indicates the likelihood of benefits eligibility. For instance, using Pell eligibility status to identify students who might be eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program.

**Indirect items:** Using data to infer about the likelihood of benefits. For instance, reporting children as dependents can be an indicator for WIC or Child Tax Credit eligibility. Or data can be used to identify risk factors for basic need insecurity, such as being a single parent or previously experiencing homelessness.

## Finding 2: IHEs that conduct outreach communicate most frequently about SNAP and ACP, with and without using FAFSA data

SNAP and ACP were the most popular programs for conducting targeted outreach using FAFSA data at 85% and 64%, respectively. Fewer than 20% of respondents reported using FAFSA data to conduct direct outreach about the health insurance available under the Affordable Care Act or the Child Tax Credit.

### Institutions providing direct outreach by means tested program, with FAFSA data



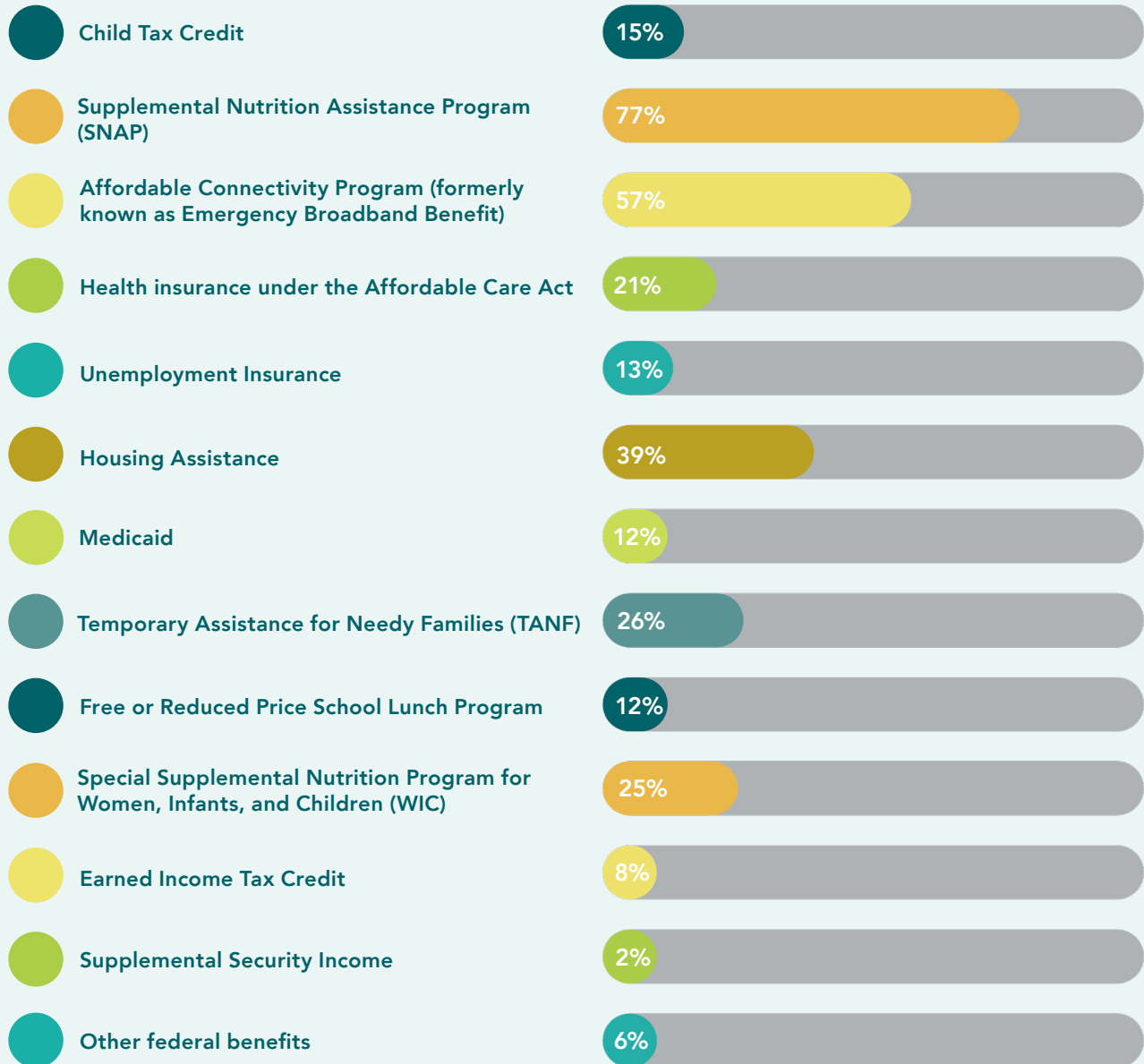
### Something to Watch: Legislative and Regulatory Changes

Recent legislation introduces new complexity into the ability of postsecondary institutions to use FAFSA data to conduct means-tested benefits outreach to their students. Beginning with the 2024-25 aid year, income information on the FAFSA will be obtained directly from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). While currently data like Adjusted Gross Income is classified as FAFSA data for these purposes, moving forward it will be classified on the FAFSA as Federal Taxpayer Information, which has its own, stricter data sharing limitations. This may mean that financial aid administrators are no longer able to share the data they currently share with basic needs staff on campus or external social services workers.



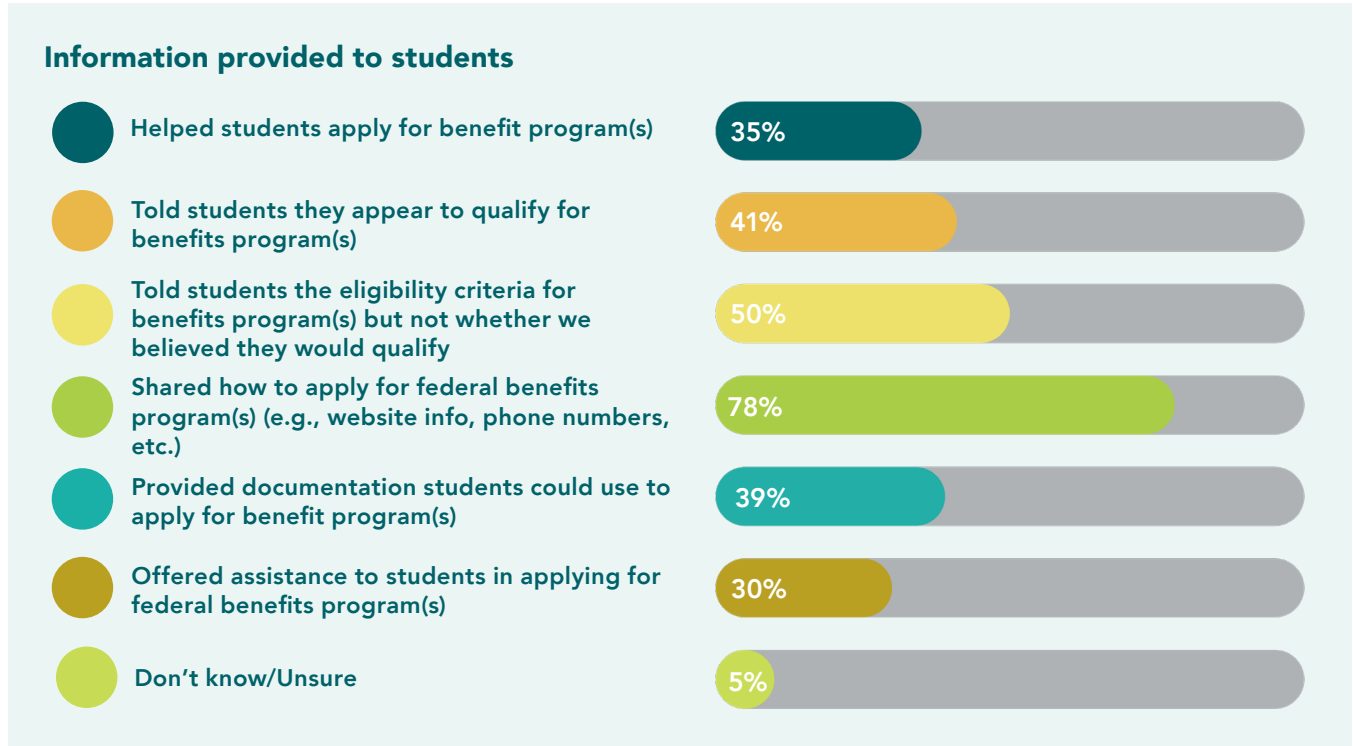
SNAP and ACP also topped the list of federal means-tested benefits about which schools conduct direct outreach without using FAFSA data, at 77% and 57%, respectively. Nearly 4 in 10 respondents (39%) also conducted outreach to students about federal housing assistance, and about one-quarter conducted outreach about Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), at 26% and 25%, respectively, without using FAFSA data.

### Institutions providing direct outreach without FAFSA data, by means tested program



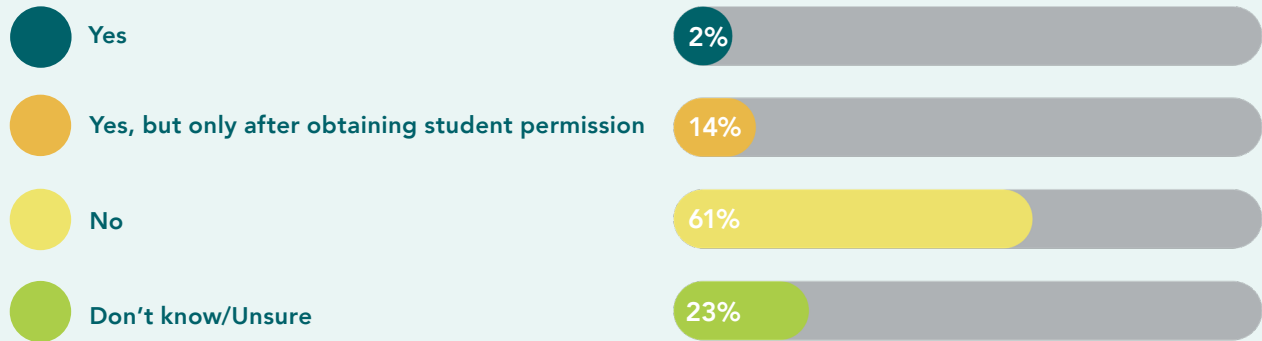
### Finding 3: Institutions provided information to students about how to apply for benefits and eligibility criteria; few share information with other agencies.

Information institutions provided in means-tested benefits outreach included how to apply for benefits (78%), eligibility criteria (50%), and informing individual students they appear to qualify for federal means-tested benefits (41%).



Data sharing between institutions and social service agencies can increase student access to benefits because it streamlines the process and doesn't require a student to repeatedly answer the same income questions. The DCL notes "IHEs may use FAFSA data to verify that students meet these requirements directly with the State SNAP agency, provided IHEs obtain the prior written consent of the student under the FERPA regulations..." This would dramatically ease student access to SNAP. The data show that the activity ED explicitly endorses — sharing data directly with county or state agencies — is only happening at 14% of institutions. The vast majority of IHEs are not engaging in this sort of data sharing, closing an avenue to simplified access.

### Institutions' sharing of student data with state and local agencies



### A Fear of FERPA

A fear of violating the Higher Education Act (HEA) FAFSA data sharing rules, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), or other relevant privacy laws, is driving some aid administrators away from targeted outreach to students. The survey findings show that 23% of aid administrators are fearful of using FAFSA data in a way that is not authorized by the federal government.

The DCL stresses the importance of ensuring that the FAFSA data is used appropriately and in ways that do not violate a student's privacy but ultimately permits IHEs to do direct outreach based on FAFSA data. In HLA's interviews with aid administrators, we learned that the DCL provided some administrators the justification to do targeted outreach that they had before been wary about, or assuaged the fears of those already doing such outreach.

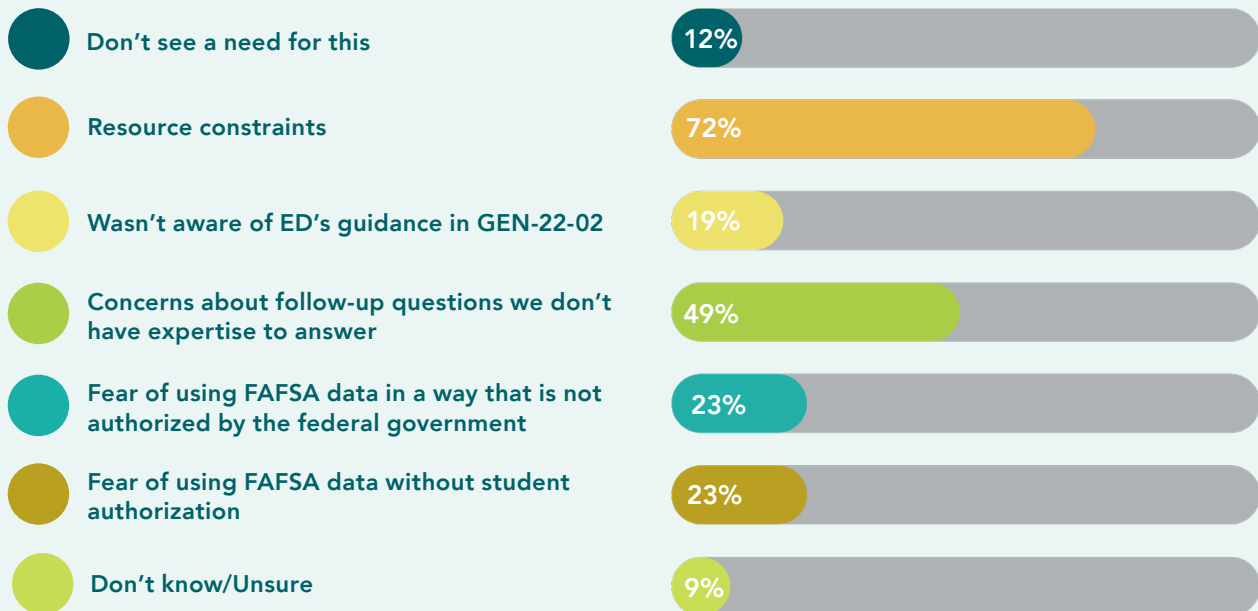
“**I'm conscious of FERPA and data sharing rules, so I'm protective of our financial aid data. That's why our office identifies and reaches out directly to potentially eligible students ourselves rather than asking other departments to do this outreach.**

– Megan Hartless, Director of Financial Aid, Blue Ridge Community College in Virginia

## Finding 4: Sixty percent of institutions do not conduct direct outreach; citing resource constraints.

Of the respondents who reported they did not conduct direct outreach to students about federal means-tested benefits, 72% cited resource constraints and 49% cited concern about follow-up questions they're not qualified to answer as reasons. More than half of respondents (56%) who reported they did not conduct direct outreach about benefits indicated their institution conducts indirect outreach about benefits, such as providing general information in print publications, general information on institutional websites, flyers posted on campus, or non-targeted emails to all students.

### Reasons institutions are not providing direct outreach to students





# Approaches to Outreach: Activities Financial Aid Offices Can Conduct

Colleges and universities seeking to address students' unmet financial or basic needs can use FAFSA data as the foundation for engaging in a range of benefits access activities from telling students they might qualify for benefits, to providing documentation necessary for the application, to helping students with the nuts and bolts of applying.

## SHARE INFORMATION WITH STUDENTS

Information sharing is a good entry point for institutions new to benefits outreach. It is a low-touch intervention that requires fewer resources and does not depend on in-depth knowledge of eligibility rules. As noted in the DCL, by using the information drawn from students' FAFSAs, aid administrators can identify which students are low-income and *may be* eligible for SNAP, ACP, health insurance through the ACA or Medicaid, and the CTC. The financial aid office can then conduct direct outreach using mail, email, and/or text and provide the information standalone or as part of other contact, such as financial aid offers. Engaging in information sharing outreach does not require aid administrators or other college staff to be experts on public assistance program rules. The school can simply notify the student of the availability of means-tested benefits programs and/or their *potential* eligibility and provide contact information for the relevant county or state social services agencies and offer to provide the documentation necessary, like Pell receipt or Federal Work-Study eligibility, to apply for benefits.

### SNAP + COVID: Temporary Expansion

The federal government expanded SNAP access to more low-income students during the COVID-19 national health emergency by temporarily changing the SNAP student rules. SNAP access was expanded to those students who met the SNAP income eligibility guidelines and had a zero expected family contribution (EFC) or were eligible for work-study. Many schools that had not previously engaged in benefits access activities informed students of their potential SNAP eligibility. Outreach was largely conducted by aid administrators through letters, emails, or texts. Some colleges conducted general outreach by notifying the entire student body of these changes, while others used their FAFSA data to identify those with a zero EFC and work-study eligibility and directly reached out to that population.

**Sierra College, Rocklin, California**

Sierra College’s financial aid office regularly identifies students who potentially meet the eligibility criteria for benefits. For instance, they send out an auto-generated email to students potentially eligible for ACP, as well as CalFresh, California’s SNAP program, and encourage them to use their letter as proof of benefits receipt when meeting with a county eligibility worker on campus. The college’s financial aid administrator, Linda Williams, thinks other aid administrators are hesitant to participate in benefits access activities because of a perceived added workload; but argues it’s not. She estimated it took a day to run the data on the roughly 17,000 students at the community college. She noted that providing students with more support on the front-end will save financial aid administrators substantial time in supporting them on the back-end through satisfactory academic progress appeals and assisting stopped-out students to re-enroll.

**University of California, San Diego, San Diego, California**

The University of California, San Diego financial aid office identifies students receiving Federal Work-Study and those who appear to meet SNAP income requirements. The financial aid office identified thousands of students to contact twice a year. In the email, the student is encouraged to connect with the county Department of Social Services staff person who comes to campus to process benefits applications. The financial aid administrator also includes CalFresh information in other outreach to students and is strategic about when the letter is sent to students.

**Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, Virginia**

The financial aid office at Blue Ridge Community College is also proactive in reaching out to students with basic needs insecurity. In June 2020, the financial aid office sent a targeted letter to students asking if they had been struggling to pay for food or the internet and informed students they might be eligible for SNAP and ACP. The office also reaches out to all Pell-eligible students because they may qualify to receive other benefits, as well.



## WORK WITH A BASIC NEEDS CENTER OR BENEFITS NAVIGATOR

An increasing number of colleges and universities have established basic needs centers or hired benefits navigators. Financial aid offices can use their FAFSA data to inform targeted students of potential benefit eligibility and partner with the centers to take on the more complicated components of connecting students to benefits and other community resources.

### ***University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), Santa Barbara, California***

The University of California at Santa Barbara's financial aid office partners with the school's Food Security and Basic Needs Advising Center (SNAC) to help students apply for means-tested programs. The financial aid office reaches out to Federal Work-Study participants about CalFresh and encourages those students to visit the SNAC, while also providing information about how to apply directly through the county. SNAC student workers follow up with every student who applies, as well as when students have their CalFresh interview with the county Department of Social Services (DSS) office and at renewal. UCSB works closely with the county DSS office and can escalate cases directly to a CalFresh case manager who works with UCSB students if the student believes there was an error in their eligibility determination. SNAC has helped over 4,000 students apply for CalFresh and plans to start doing targeted outreach to students for Medi-Cal, California's Medicaid program.

### ***Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania***

The Dean of Students Office works with the financial aid office at Community College of Allegheny County to query their FAFSA data to identify students who could be eligible for public benefits. They look at a range of variables, including Pell receipt, dependency, children, and age, to identify students who may be eligible. Resource Navigators then conduct outreach to students encouraging them to connect for resources. Once students connect with a Resource Navigator, they are referred to college and community resources. In addition, the students can apply for benefits through COMPASS, Pennsylvania's online public benefits application, or utilize CCAC's partnership with Benefits Data Trust to be screened and complete applications for various benefits programs. CCAC also has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the state Department of Human Services that allows them to share limited data so that each is aware of college and community services students are utilizing.

## PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION FOR STUDENTS' BENEFITS APPLICATIONS

Financial aid administrators can also help connect students to benefits by providing documentation that helps county and state health and human services agencies determine a student's eligibility for benefits. For instance, aid administrators may provide proof of Pell receipt for a student to access the ACP or

confirmation of a student's eligibility for work-study to help the student access SNAP. As seen in the survey, 39% (*Table: Information provided to students on page 8*) of survey respondents who help students access benefits also provide supplemental documentation for students to apply.

## HELP STUDENTS APPLY FOR BENEFITS FROM START TO FINISH

If an institution has the capacity and expertise, the financial aid or other office helps the student on every step of the way, including to complete the actual benefits application.

### ***Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio***

Cuyahoga Community College's financial aid office provides comprehensive benefits application assistance to students. The process begins when the school looks at what benefits students report receiving on the FAFSA. The FAFSA asks if students receive Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Free and Reduced Price Lunch, or WIC. If the students are low-income and do not report receiving these benefits then students are sent a letter informing them of the benefits

they may qualify for and how financial aid can help connect them to those services. Then the office uses FAFSA income data to determine who might be eligible. They built parameters in their system to match the poverty guidelines to automatically select these students based on their FAFSA responses. They send those students a survey about student food and housing insecurity, as well as other needs, and invite the student to meet with one of financial aid's peer financial coaches to apply for benefits through Ohio's online portal. The financial aid office also shares public benefits information with students applying for emergency aid, those who ask for professional judgment or further assessment, due to an income change, and those students who don't complete the FAFSA.



## COORDINATE WITH THE COUNTY OR STATE TO INCREASE ACCESS TO BENEFITS

Colleges and universities can partner with their county or state social or human services agencies to help connect students to benefits. Institutions can host county or state workers on campus periodically to take applications for public benefits, meet regularly with social services workers to troubleshoot cases, and even have workers at the county or state office assigned to process college student applications.

As noted earlier, the DCL also highlighted how IHEs can streamline the SNAP application process by using FAFSA data to verify that students meet eligibility requirements directly with the SNAP agency, provided they have student consent.

### ***University of California, Berkeley (UCB), Berkeley, California***

University of California, Berkeley Basic Needs Center staff meet regularly with the Alameda County Department of Social Services (DSS) to discuss policy changes and outreach efforts, examine trends in benefits applications and denials, and to troubleshoot cases. Students at UCB account for the largest share of CalFresh applicants in the county, so it was not hard for Alameda DSS to decide to meet regularly with the Basic Needs Center staff.

### ***Compton Community College District (Compton), Compton, California***

In 2021, the Compton Community College District and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)

entered into an MOU to share data in order to increase the utilization of CalFresh benefits among Compton's students from low-income backgrounds. Compton shares data about its students with DPSS to enable the agency to verify CalFresh receipt and conduct screening of students who may be potentially eligible to receive CalFresh benefits. DPSS then returns information about Compton students' eligibility for and use of CalFresh benefits, so Compton may conduct outreach to its students. Compton informs each student about the MOU and asks each student to sign an authorization to allow Compton to share the student's data with DPSS. A creative approach to securing student authorization for data sharing, students can also provide authorization through a QR code included on flyers posted around campus.

At least twice a year Compton provides data to DPSS for students who sign authorizations. These data include any information that is relevant to the identification of each student and the determination of each student's eligibility to receive CalFresh benefits. Such data include the student's contact info, date of birth, income, family size, and the number of dependents. DPSS uses this data to determine if the student is receiving or would be eligible for CalFresh benefits and shares the information with Compton to conduct CalFresh outreach and analyze the data to determine the impact of CalFresh benefits on students' educational outcomes.

# Conclusion: Room to Grow

Interviews with financial aid and other college staff show great potential among the 18% of respondents who plan to do outreach in the future. Resources like Benefits Data Trust's [Benefits Access for Student Success: A Toolkit For Leveraging Data to Find Eligible Students](#) and NASFAA's data sharing [white paper](#) and [decision tree](#), as well as training, can help schools figure out how to embark on sharing data and develop their own model.

## Benefits Data Trust Toolkit

Benefits Data Trust, an organization that helps link people to public benefits and services, released a [toolkit](#) in early 2023 to help colleges and universities leverage available data to identify students who are likely eligible for federal programs such as the ACP, CTC, Medicaid, SNAP, WIC. The toolkit, which was guided by the feedback of a volunteer advisory council of national and institutional leaders in student benefits access, builds institutional capacity for connecting potentially eligible undergraduates with benefits that support food security, improve health outcomes, and support persistence and graduation.

## *What about the 43% who do not conduct direct outreach and don't plan to in the future?*

Financial aid offices across the country are facing a staffing [crisis](#) that began even before the COVID-19 pandemic with half of respondents to a recent survey indicating they were operating at 75% capacity and dealing with high staff turnover rates and difficulty hiring qualified staff. Given the significant compliance burden that falls on financial aid offices, and the major consequences of noncompliance (including steep fines and even loss of eligibility to participate in the federal student aid programs,) it is not surprising that when financial aid offices are short-staffed, they prioritize what must be done before the things they'd like to do, such as outreach on means-tested benefits.

Some may not have the option much longer. For instance, California has taken further steps toward universal adoption of policies that take advantage of the DCL by enacting AB 2810, which requires each California State University and community college to use FAFSA data to identify students who are likely to meet the income qualifications for the CalFresh program and outreach to these students via email. In other cases, such as the Community College of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, the college expects financial aid to share data with the benefits navigators it hired. In the past couple of years, Oregon passed legislation and Kentucky made administrative decisions to hire benefits navigators across the state, with other states rolling out a navigator program more slowly. Other states, like Virginia and North Carolina, have hired an intermediary like Single Stop, to use FAFSA data, pulled by financial aid administrators, to target students for outreach.

# Acknowledgments

Higher Learning Advocates (HLA) is the leading nonprofit higher education policy research and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing bipartisan solutions that support today's students, connect opportunity, and drive value in postsecondary education. To learn more about HLA, visit [www.higherlearningadvocates.org](http://www.higherlearningadvocates.org).



The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) is a nonprofit membership organization that represents more than 29,000 **financial aid professionals** at approximately 3,000 colleges, universities, and career schools across the country. NASFAA member institutions serve nine out of every 10 undergraduates in the U.S. Based in Washington, D.C., NASFAA is the only national association with a primary focus on student aid legislation, regulatory analysis, and training for financial aid administrators.

Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield, HLA's managing director, policy and research, and Jill Desjean, NASFAA's senior policy analyst, are the lead authors of this brief.

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# Appendix:

## OVERALL RESULTS

Table 1A: Is your institution currently providing direct outreach to students about any federal benefit programs in either of the following ways: Using FAFSA data or without using FAFSA data?

Yes	27%
No, and we have no plans to do so	43%
No, but we plan to do so in the future	18%
Don't know	12%
n	342

Table 2A: What federal benefit programs is your institution providing direct outreach about using FAFSA data? (Select all that apply.)

Child Tax Credit	15%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	85%
Affordable Connectivity Program (formerly known as Emergency Broadband Benefit Program)	64%
Health insurance under the Affordable Care Act	16%
Other federal benefit programs not specified in ED guidance as permissible uses of FAFSA data for direct outreach	18%
Recovery Rebate Credit / Economic Impact Payment	11%
n	89

Table 3A: What federal benefit programs is your institution providing direct outreach about not using FAFSA data? (Select all that apply.)

Child Tax Credit	15%
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	77%
Affordable Connectivity Program (formerly known as Emergency Broadband Benefit Program)	57%
Health insurance under the Affordable Care Act	21%
Unemployment Insurance	13%
Housing Assistance	39%
Medicaid	12%
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	26%
Free or Reduced Price School Lunch	12%
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	25%
Earned Income Tax Credit	8%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	2%
Other federal benefits (Please specify below.)	6%
n	84

Table 4A: Please share any information you have about response rates and/or take-up rates resulting from your outreach. (Select all that apply.)

We received some type of response from students (request for more information, request for proof of Pell receipt for Affordable Connectivity Program, request to complete SNAP forms, request for documentation of college attendance for public benefits like TANF, SNAP, Housing Assistance; etc.) for whom we conducted outreach	85%
We are aware of students having received one of these federal benefits (SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, WIC, SSI, Free or Reduced School Lunch receipt is reported on FAFSA; Child Tax Credit/Earned Income Tax Credit is on tax return; etc.) after we conducted outreach	56%
The county/state shares such data with the institution	15%
n	41

Table 5A: What information did you provide to students about eligibility for federal benefit programs? (Select all that apply.)

Helped students apply for benefit program(s)	35%
Told students they appear to qualify for benefits program(s)	41%
Told students eligibility criteria for benefits program(s) but not whether we believed they would qualify	50%
Shared how to apply for federal benefits program(s) (e.g., website info, phone numbers, etc.)	78%
Provided documentation students could use to apply for benefit program(s)	39%
Offered assistance to students in applying for federal benefits program(s)	30%
Don't know/Unsure	5%
n	105

Table 6A: What office is conducting this outreach?

Financial aid office only	46%
Financial aid office and other offices	34%
Only other office(s) not including the financial aid office	19%
Don't know/Unsure	2%
n	107

Table 7A: Does your office or institution share data with local, county, or state government agencies to facilitate federal benefits access?

Yes	2%
Yes, but only after obtaining student permission	14%
No	61%
Don't know/Unsure	23%
n	107

Table 8A: You indicated that your institution is not providing direct outreach about federal benefit programs using FAFSA data, not using FAFSA data, or both. Why isn't your institution providing students with direct outreach about federal benefit programs? (Select all that apply.)

Don't see a need for this	12%
Resource constraints	72%
Wasn't aware of ED's guidance in GEN-22-02	19%
Concerns about follow-up questions we don't have expertise to answer	49%
Fear of using FAFSA data in a way that is not authorized by the federal government	23%
Fear of using FAFSA data without student authorization	23%
Don't know/Unsure	9%
n	182

Table 9A: Does your office or another office on campus provide information about federal benefits program(s) other than by conducting direct outreach to students (e.g., general information in print publications, general information on institutional websites, flyers posted on campus, non-targeted emails to all students, etc.)? (Select all that apply.)

Yes, my office provides general information about federal benefits programs	21%
Yes, another office provides general information about federal benefits programs	35%
No, no office on my campus provides general information about federal benefits programs	23%
Don't know/Unsure	29%
n	188

## BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR RESULTS

Table 1B: Is your institution currently providing direct outreach to students about any federal benefit programs in either of the following ways: Using FAFSA data or without using FAFSA data?

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Yes	24%	28%	36%	13%	23%
No, and we have no plans to do so	48%	42%	34%	33%	62%
No, but we plan to do so in the future	18%	17%	16%	40%	0%
Don't know	11%	13%	14%	13%	15%
n	148	93	73	15	13

Table 2B: What federal benefit programs is your institution providing direct outreach about using FAFSA data? (Select all that apply.)

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Child Tax Credit	18%	12%	16%	-	-
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	74%	92%	96%	-	-
Affordable Connectivity Program (formerly known as Emergency Broadband Benefit Program)	59%	58%	76%	-	-
Health insurance under the Affordable Care Act	21%	15%	12%	-	-
Recovery Rebate Credit / Economic Impact Payment	12%	12%	12%	-	-
Other federal benefit programs not specified in ED guidance as permissible uses of FAFSA data for direct outreach	15%	19%	16%	-	-
n	34	26	25	-	-

Table 3B: What federal benefit programs is your institution providing direct outreach about not using FAFSA data? (Select all that apply.)

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Child Tax Credit	12%	17%	17%	-	-
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	73%	76%	78%	-	-
Affordable Connectivity Program (formerly known as Emergency Broadband Benefit Program)	38%	62%	74%	-	-
Health insurance under the Affordable Care Act	27%	17%	22%	-	-
Unemployment Insurance	8%	14%	22%	-	-
Housing Assistance	27%	59%	26%	-	-
Medicaid	4%	17%	13%	-	-
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	8%	34%	39%	-	-
Free or Reduced Price School Lunch	4%	21%	9%	-	-
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)	8%	41%	26%	-	-
Earned Income Tax Credit	4%	7%	13%	-	-
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	0%	7%	0%	-	-
Other federal benefits (Please specify below.)	15%	3%	0%	-	-
n	26	29	23	-	-



Table 4B: Please share any information you have about response rates and/or take up rates resulting from your outreach. (Select all that apply.)

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
We received some type of response from students (request for more information, request for proof of Pell receipt for Affordable Connectivity Program, request to complete SNAP forms, request for documentation of college attendance for public benefits like TANF, SNAP, Housing Assistance; etc.) for whom we conducted outreach	80%	100%	90%	-	-
We are aware of students having received one of these federal benefits (SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, WIC, SSI, Free or Reduced School Lunch receipt is reported on FAFSA; Child Tax Credit/Earned Income Tax Credit is on tax return; etc.) after we conducted outreach	73%	40%	30%	-	-
The county/state shares such data with the institution	7%	20%	20%	-	-
n	15	10	10	-	-

Table 5B: What information did you provide to students about eligibility for federal benefit programs? (Select all that apply.)

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Helped students apply for benefit program(s)	37%	38%	31%	-	-
Told students they appear to qualify for benefits program(s)	46%	41%	35%	-	-
Told students eligibility criteria for benefits program(s) but not whether we believed they would qualify	54%	53%	35%	-	-
Shared how to apply for federal benefits program(s) (e.g., website info, phone numbers, etc.)	71%	84%	77%	-	-
Provided documentation students could use to apply for benefit program(s)	39%	25%	46%	-	-
Offered assistance to students in applying for federal benefits program(s)	24%	34%	31%	-	-
Don't know/Unsure	5%	6%	4%	-	-
n	41	32	26	-	-

Table 6B: What office is conducting this outreach?

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Financial aid office only	52%	22%	54%	-	-
Financial aid office and other offices	26%	47%	35%	-	-
Only other office(s) not including the financial aid office	19%	31%	8%	-	-
Don't know/Unsure	2%	0%	4%	-	-
n	42	32	26	-	-

Table 7B: Does your office or institution share data with local, county, or state government agencies to facilitate federal benefits access?

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Yes	2%	0%	4%	-	-
Yes, but only after obtaining student permission	10%	13%	12%	-	-
No	64%	56%	65%	-	-
Don't know/Unsure	24%	31%	19%	-	-
n	42	32	26	-	-

Table 8B: You indicated that your institution is not providing direct outreach about federal benefit programs using FAFSA data, not using FAFSA data, or both. Why isn't your institution providing students with direct outreach about federal benefit programs? (Select all that apply.)

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Don't see a need for this	14%	8%	17%	-	-
Resource constraints	70%	71%	87%	-	-
Wasn't aware of ED's guidance in GEN-22-02	21%	15%	10%	-	-
Concerns about follow-up questions we don't have expertise to answer	58%	31%	60%	-	-
Fear of using FAFSA data in a way that is not authorized by the federal government	21%	21%	37%	-	-
Fear of using FAFSA data without student authorization	18%	21%	43%	-	-
Don't know/Unsure	4%	15%	7%	-	-
n	90	48	30	-	-

Table 9B: Does your office or another office on campus provide information about federal benefits program(s) other than by conducting direct outreach to students (e.g., general information in print publications, general information on institutional websites, flyers posted on campus, non-targeted emails to all students, etc.)? (Select all that apply.)

	Nonprofit	Community Colleges	Public 4-Yr	For Profit	Graduate/ Professional
Yes, my office provides general information about federal benefits programs	18%	23%	19%	-	-
Yes, another office provides general information about federal benefits programs	33%	44%	41%	-	-
No, no office on my campus provides general information about federal benefits programs	26%	19%	13%	-	-
Don't know/Unsure	33%	21%	34%	-	-
n	92	48	32	-	-

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Wolfson, J., Insolera, N., Cohen, A. and Leung, C. The effect of food insecurity during college on graduation and type of degree attained: evidence from a nationally representative longitudinal survey. *Public Health Nutrition*: 25(2), 389–397. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/4048E0A71FB2CB5B6B7C984AC1AE5F9E/S1368980021003104a.pdf/the-effect-of-food-insecurity-during-college-on-graduation-and-type-of-degree-attained-evidence-from-a-nationally-representative-longitudinal-survey.pdf>  
<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2021/food-insecurity-during-college-years-linked-to-lower-graduation-rate>

Hallett, R. E. and Freas, A. (2018). Community college students' experiences with homelessness and housing insecurity. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. 42(10), 724-739. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1186316>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/trends-in-college-pricing-student-aid-2022.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Goldrick-Rab, S. (2023). Food Insecurity and Homelessness in American Higher Education: An Overview of New Nationally Representative Estimates. <https://saragoldrickrab.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/NPSAS-Estimate-Memo-SGR-7.28.23.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018). Food Insecurity: Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-95>

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