SOCIAL WORK, B.S.W.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Greater Allegheny

Program Description

The Bachelor of Social Work major provides broad-based educational experiences for undergraduate students interested in working in the private and public sector to provide social services for diverse people and communities. Students will learn to critically engage in social problems by understanding the cultural, economic, environmental, and historical conditions individuals and groups face, and they will be prepared to promote individual, family, and community well-being. Students will be engaged in the scholarly study of social issues, and they will have clinical experiences in community-based organizations, foundations, and government offices.

What is Social Work?

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of social work is the profession's dual focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living. Social workers promote social justice and social change with and on behalf of clients. Social workers are sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and strive to end discrimination, oppression, poverty, and other forms of social injustice.

(National Association of Social Workers, 2022)

You Might Like This Program If...

- You have a desire to promote social justice and social change in society
- You enjoy engaging with diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities
- You are enthusiastic about helping others cope effectively during challenging times
- You are passionate about alleviating poverty and improving living conditions
- You are interested in helping people manage acute medical conditions, chronic stress, and illnesses
- You are fascinated about providing mental health and substance use treatment services

Entrance to Major

Entry to the Social Work major requires:

- the completion of the following four entry-to-major courses with a C or higher grade: SOCW 195, SOCW 205, SOCW 215, SOCW 290
- a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher
- a minimum of 29.1 credits

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Social Work degree in Social Work, a minimum of 122 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	7
Requirements for the Major	92

22 of the 45 credits for General Education are included in the Requirements for the Major. This includes: 9 credits of GWS courses; 4 credits of GQ courses; 3 credits of GHW courses; 6 credits of GS courses.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
BBH 143	Drugs, Behavior, and Health	3
HDFS 301	Values and Ethics in Health and Human Development Professions	3
PSU 8	First-Year Seminar University College	1
PSYCH 100	Introductory Psychology	3
PSYCH 270	Introduction to Abnormal Psychology	3
SOC/HDFS/CMAS 258N	Introduction to Child Maltreatment and Advocacy Studies	3
Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better		
CAS 100	Effective Speech	3
ENGL 15	Rhetoric and Composition	3
ENGL 202A	Effective Writing: Writing in the Social Sciences	3
PUBPL 304W	Public Policy Analysis	3
SOCW 195	Introduction to Social Work with Field Hours	3
SOCW 205	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice	3
SOCW 215	Introduction to Social Welfare History, Policy, Programs, and Services	3
SOCW 290	Human Behavior and the Social Environment	3
SOCW 300	Social Work Methods - Individuals	3
SOCW 301	Social Work Methods - Groups	3
SOCW 302	Social Work Methods - Families	3
SOCW 303	Methods - Communities & Organizations	3
SOCW 315	Assessment, Documentation, and Effective Interviewing Skills in Social Work	3
SOCW 407	Research Methods in Social Work	3
SOCW 495A	Social Work - Internship	3
SOCW 495B	Social Work - Internship	9
STAT 200	Elementary Statistics	4
Additional Courses		
ECON 102	Introductory Microeconomic Analysis and Policy	3
or ECON 104	Introductory Macroeconomic Analysis and Policy	
RHS 433	Trauma-informed care for school & human service professionals	3
or PSYCH 442	Trauma and Resiliency	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Select 3 credit Sociology Courses (SOC)		3
Select a 3 credit Political Science Course (PLSC)		3

Supporting Courses and Related Areas: Require a grade of C or better	
Select 6 credits of Social Work 400-level courses	6

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)
- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)
- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies
- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration
- **GN,** may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement
All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement
6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum
3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits
A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work
Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition
The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Program Learning Objectives

- **Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior:** Social workers understand the value base of the profession and its ethical standards, as well as relevant laws and regulations that may impact practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Social workers understand frameworks of ethical decision-making and how to apply principles of critical thinking to those frameworks in practice, research, and policy arenas. Social workers recognize personal values and the distinction between personal and professional values. They also understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions influence their professional judgment and behavior. Social workers understand the profession's history, its mission, and the roles and responsibilities of the profession. Social Workers also understand the role of other professions when engaged in inter-professional teams. Social workers recognize the importance of life-long learning and are committed to continually updating their skills to ensure they are relevant and effective. Social workers also understand emerging forms of technology and the ethical use of technology in social work practice.
  - Social workers:
    - make ethical decisions by applying the standards of the NASW Code of Ethics, relevant laws and regulations, models for ethical decision-making, ethical conduct of research, and additional codes of ethics as appropriate to context;
    - use reflection and self-regulation to manage personal values and maintain professionalism in practice situations;
    - demonstrate professional demeanor in behavior; appearance; and oral, written, and electronic communication;
    - use technology ethically and appropriately to facilitate practice outcomes; and
    - use supervision and consultation to guide professional judgment and behavior.
- **Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice:** Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of

multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/ spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

- Social workers:
  - apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels;
  - present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and
  - apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.
- **Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice:** Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.
  - Social workers:
    - apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and
    - engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.
- **Engage In Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice:** Social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice. Social workers know the principles of logic, scientific inquiry, and culturally informed and ethical approaches to building knowledge. Social workers understand that evidence that informs practice derives from multi-disciplinary sources and multiple ways of knowing. They also understand the processes for translating research findings into effective practice.
  - Social workers:
    - use practice experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research;
    - apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings; and
    - use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery.
- **Engage in Policy Practice:** Social workers understand that human rights and social justice, as well as social welfare and services, are mediated by policy and its implementation at the federal, state, and local levels. Social workers understand the history and current structures of social policies and services, the role of policy in service delivery, and the role of practice in policy development. Social workers understand their role in policy development and implementation within their practice settings at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels and they actively engage in policy practice to effect change within those settings. Social workers recognize and understand the historical, social, cultural, economic, organizational, environmental, and global influences that affect social policy. They are also knowledgeable about policy formulation, analysis, implementation, and evaluation.

- Social workers:
  - Identify social policy at the local, state, and federal level that impacts well-being, service delivery, and access to social services;
  - assess how social welfare and economic policies impact the delivery of and access to social services;
  - apply critical thinking to analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice.
- **Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:** Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and inter-professional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.
  - Social workers:
    - apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and
    - use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.
- **Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:** Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making.
  - Social workers:
    - collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies;

- apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies;
- develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and
- select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

- **Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:** Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of inter-professional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, inter-professional, and inter-organizational collaboration.
  - Social workers:
    - critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies;
    - apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies;
    - use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes;
    - negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and
    - facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.
- **Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities:** Social workers understand that evaluation is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities. Social workers recognize the importance of evaluating processes and outcomes to advance practice, policy, and service delivery effectiveness. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in evaluating outcomes. Social workers understand qualitative and quantitative methods for evaluating outcomes and practice effectiveness.
  - Social workers:
    - select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes;
    - apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;

- critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes; and
- apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/)

Greater Allegheny

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

Social Work, B.S.W. at Greater Allegheny Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
PSU 8	1	SOCW 205 (GS) (US/IL)[*#]	3
SOCW 195 (GS)[*#]	3	ECON 102 or 104 (GS)[†]	3
ENGL 15 (GWS)[‡†]	3	CAS 100 (GWS)[‡†]	3
General Education Course (Sociology)	3	General Education Course (GN)	3
General Education Course (GA)	3	General Education Course (GA)	3
Elective	3		
	16		**15**

Second Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
SOCW 215 (GS) (US)*#	3	SOCW 290 (GS)*#	3
PSYCH 100 (GS)†	3	BBH 143 (GHW)†	3
Political Science Course (US)	3	ENGL 202A (GWS)*‡†	3
General Education Course (GN)	3	General Education Course (GQ)	3
General Education Course (GH)	3	General Education Course (GN)	3
	15		**15**

Third Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
SOCW 300*	3	SOCW 302*	3
SOCW 301*	3	SOCW 303*	3
PSYCH 270 (GS)	3	SOCW 315*	3
SOC 258N (GS) (GHW)	3	HDFS 301	3
STAT 200 (GQ)*‡†	4	General Education Course (GH)	3
	16		**15**

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
SOCW 495A*	3	SOCW 495B*	9
SOCW 407*	3	400-Level Social Work Supportive Course	3
RHS 433 or PSYCH 442	3	Elective	3
PUBPL 304W*	3		
400-Level Social Work Supportive Course	3		
	15		**15**

Total Credits 122

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
# Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Program Notes:

- Students must have a minimum 2.00 cumulative GPA and complete and earn a C or higher grade in SOCW 195, SOCW 205, SOCW 215 and SOCW 290 for Entrance to Major.

Social Work, B.S.W. at Commonwealth Campuses

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
PSU 8	1	General Education Course (GH)	3
ENGL 15 (GWS)[‡†]	3	ECON 102 or 104 (GS)	3
General Education Course (Sociology)	3	CAS 100 (GWS)[‡†]	3
General Education Course (GA)	3	PSYCH 100 (GS)[†]	3
General Education Course (GN)	3	General Education Course (GA)	3
Elective	3		
	16		**15**

Second Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
General Education Course (GH)	3	General Education Course (GN)	3
General Education Course (GN)	3	BBH 143 (GHW)[†]	3
Political Science Course (US)	3	ENGL 202A (GWS)[‡†]	3
General Education Course (GQ)	3	SOC/HDFS 258N (GS) (GHW)	3
PSYCH 270 (GS)	3	STAT 200 (GQ)[‡†]	4
	15		**16**

Third Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
SOCW 195 (GS)[*#]	3	SOCW 302[*]	3
SOCW 215 (GS) (US)[*#]	3	SOCW 303[*]	3
SOCW 205 (GS) (US/IL)[*#]	3	SOCW 300[*]	3
SOCW 290[*#]	3	HDFS 301	3
SOCW 315[*]	3	SOCW 301[*]	3
	15		**15**

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits	Spring	Credits
SOCW 495A[*]	3	SOCW 495B[*]	9
SOCW 407[*]	3	400-Level Social Work Supportive Course	3
PUBPL 304W[*]	3	Elective	3
RHS 433 or PSYCH 442	3		
400-Level Social Work Supportive Course	3		
	15		**15**

Total Credits 122

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

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Program Notes:

Students must have a minimum 2.00 cumulative GPA and complete and earn a C or higher grade in SOCW 195, SOCW 205, SOCW 215 and SOCW 290 for Entrance to Major.

Career Paths

Social workers work in a variety of settings, including mental health clinics, schools, child welfare, human service agencies, hospitals, group homes, community development corporations, and private practices. Advocacy is an important aspect of the social work profession. Social workers advocate or raise awareness with and on behalf of their clients and the profession on local, state, and national levels. Overall employment of social workers in the United States is projected to grow 12 percent from 2020 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations. Nearly 78,300 openings for social workers are projected each year, on average, over the next 10 years.

(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021)

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM (https://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/social-workers.htm)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Social work students who earn a BSW degree from accredited Council on Social Work Education programs may be eligible for advanced standing in MSW degree programs. With advanced standing, graduate social work students can earn an MSW degree in less than one year in select programs.

Professional Resources

- National Association of Social Workers (https://www.socialworkers.org/)
- National Association of Social Workers - Pennsylvania Chapter (https://www.nasw-pa.org)
- Association of Social Work Boards (https://www.aswb.org)
- Society for Social Work and Research (https://sswr.org)
- Pennsylvania State Board of Social Workers
- Licensed Bachelor Social Worker (LBSW)

- State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors Navigator (pa.gov) (https://www.pa.gov/en/ agencies/dos/department-and-offices/bpoa/boards-commissions/ social-workers-marriage-family-therapists-professional-counselors/ resources-and-documents.html)

Accreditation

The Pennsylvania State University is currently seeking accreditation for the Bachelor of Social Work Program by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE).

CSWE is a nonprofit national association in the United States representing more than 2,500 individual members, as well as graduate and undergraduate programs of professional social work education. Founded in 1952, this partnership of educational and professional institutions, social welfare agencies, and private citizens is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as the sole accrediting agency for social work education in the United States.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION (https://www.cswe.org)

Contact

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