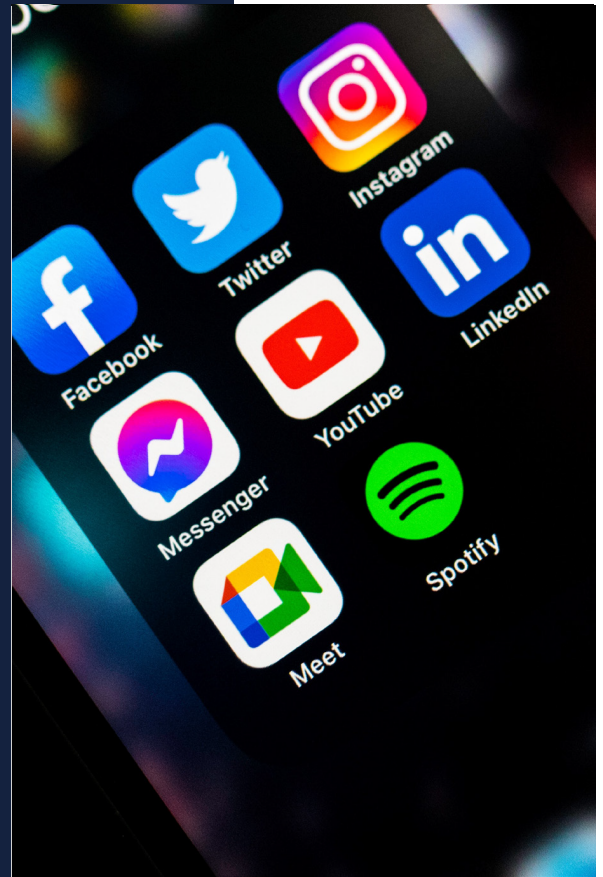
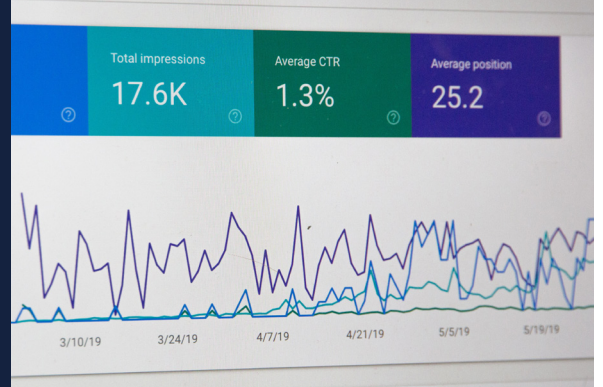


Digital Marketing Grant Program



Digital Marketing to Improve Awareness to Underserved Populations



December 2021



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Background

Grant Purpose:

The Digital Marketing Grant Program, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, is a 24-month demonstration project with the goal of researching how digital marketing may help the child support program more effectively reach and serve families.

In September 2018, OCSE awarded funds to 14 child support agencies to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents that could benefit from child support services and create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents. OC CSS was one of the 14 child support agencies selected to participate.

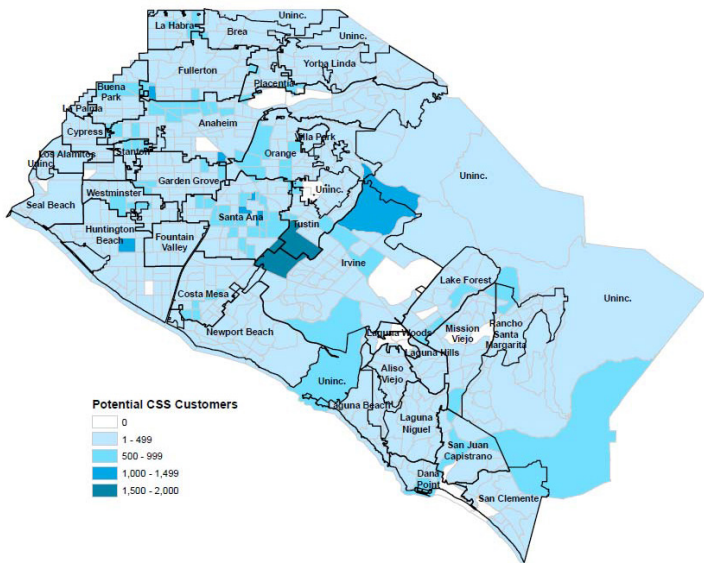
Problem Description:

While the child support program has experienced a national decline in caseload in all assistance categories, the number of families needing our services remains steady. The child poverty rate in the U.S. was 17.5% when OC CSS applied for this grant in 2017.

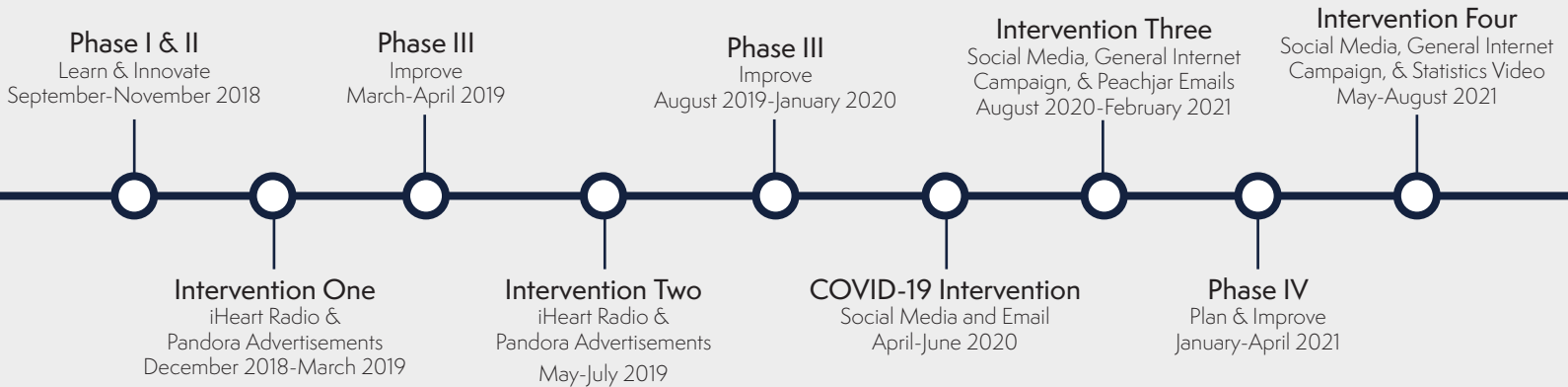
In 2013, OC CSS conducted a survey of 2,575 parents asking them why there was a delay between opening a child support case and the time of separation or childbirth (if parents were not living together). 31% of the 862 parents that responded shared they did not open a case immediately because they were not aware of our services. This made us aware that communication about who we are was a barrier for parents accessing our services.

Through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, our Research Team compared our current caseload to U.S. Census Bureau data and identified a significant number of children living in single-parent households who OC CSS is likely not serving. We hypothesized that this underserved population is not aware of our services and that we could reach out and educate these families through digital marketing strategies.

Potential CSS Customers



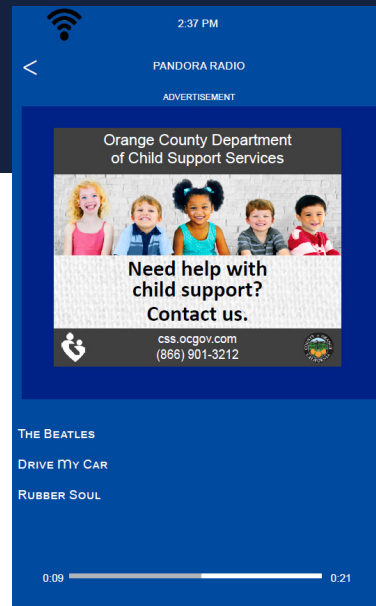
Project Timeline:



Interventions

Interventions One & Two:

iHeart and Pandora: In our first two interventions, OC CSS placed audio advertisements and companion banners on iHeart Radio and Pandora. The audio content was rooted in our simple and relatable “we’re here to help” messaging and explained our services. Advertisements were placed in targeted, underserved zip codes that we identified using census data to compare single-parent households with our custodial parent addresses. After completing the interventions, we increased use of Spanish-language advertisements, committed to making our website more user-friendly, and expanded our geographic targeting to all of Orange County. Advertisements provided a direct phone number and companion banners linked potential customers to our website.



Intervention One Targeting:

Targeted underserved geographic areas through zip codes.



Impressions: 1,226,305



Clicks: 1,327



Intervention Two Targeting:

Expanded geographic targeting to all of Orange County.



Impressions: 840, 622



Clicks: 502

Intervention Three:

We launched our third intervention in August 2020 with a focus on diversifying strategies.

Social Media Campaign: Our social media campaign ran from August 7-October 31 and consisted of static advertisements and one short video that ran on Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube under three messaging themes:

- **Diversity:** Highlighting the diverse families we serve
- **Office:** Featuring our helpful OC CSS staff
- **Back to School:** Highlighting how the school year changed due to COVID-19

General Internet Campaign: Our general internet campaign reflected the Diversity theme of our social media campaign. All advertisements provided a direct phone number and a link to a contact form that potential customers could submit to have an OC CSS staff member contact them.

Peachjar Emails: Digital flyers emailed to parents at Orange County schools through the vendor, Peachjar.

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"Just when I thought I was alone, I got the help I needed." OC Child Support Services is here to help. Click here to request a free consultation!



OC Department of Child Support Services
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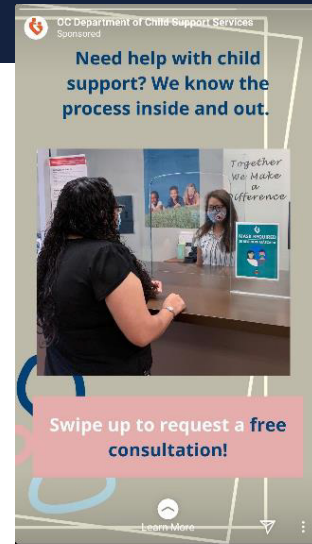
This year, "back to school" looks completely different. We can help you get the support your kids need this fall. Click here to ...See More





Intervention Three Targeting:

- The Social Media Campaign targeted Orange County residents between the ages of 13-50 with one or more children. The Back to School campaign included targeting of additional interests such as pre-school playgroups and back to school shopping.
- The General Internet Campaign targeted low-income, single parent households in Orange County.
- Peachjar emails were sent in January and February to parents at approximately 197 Orange County schools.



Social Media Campaign
Impressions: 2,730,611
Clicks: 23,809



General Internet Campaign
Impressions: 2,765,719
Clicks: 22,800



Peachjar Emails
Impressions: 68,808
Clicks: 740

Intervention Four:



Statistics Video Campaign: Running from May 7-31, this short, experimental campaign featured a 7-second video highlighting the number of Orange County families we serve with the goal normalizing participation in the child support program.

Social Media and General Internet Campaigns: Running from June 7–August 31, this longer campaign ran on Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat, Instagram and websites and mobile apps. The messaging sought to build off the success of our Office and Back to School themes with three variations on messaging:

- **Summer:** Imagery highlighting parents and children enjoying a summer activity and messaging focusing on our staff being available to help. This seasonal messaging strategy was meant to build off the success of our Back to School campaign.
- **Office:** Imagery and messaging focused on staff helping customers through the child support process. This messaging was meant to build off the success of our Office campaign.
- **Summer/Office Combination:** Utilizing the imagery from the Summer campaign, the messaging included a child-centric statement paired with the content from our office advertisements.



Intervention Four Targeting:

- The Statistics Video Campaign targeted Orange County parents with interests in childcare and other parent-related interests and/or recently became single.
- The Social Media Campaign targeted Orange County parents between the ages of 18-54. Facebook and Instagram included targeting for new parents and working parents. Snapchat included targeting for new parents and interest in children’s products and apparel. Pinterest included targeting for interest in single parenting, children’s apparel and fashion, and parenting advice.
- The General Internet Campaign targeted Orange County parents between the ages of 18-54 with additional targeting for single working parents and newly single parents.
- All advertisements targeted English and Spanish speakers.



Statistics Video Campaign
Impressions: 557,042
Clicks: 4,450



Social Media Campaign
Impressions: 2,069,728
Clicks: 12,024



General Internet Campaign
Impressions: 2,627,167
Clicks: 2,205





Evidence-Based Findings

To evaluate the effectiveness of our digital marketing strategies, OC CSS:

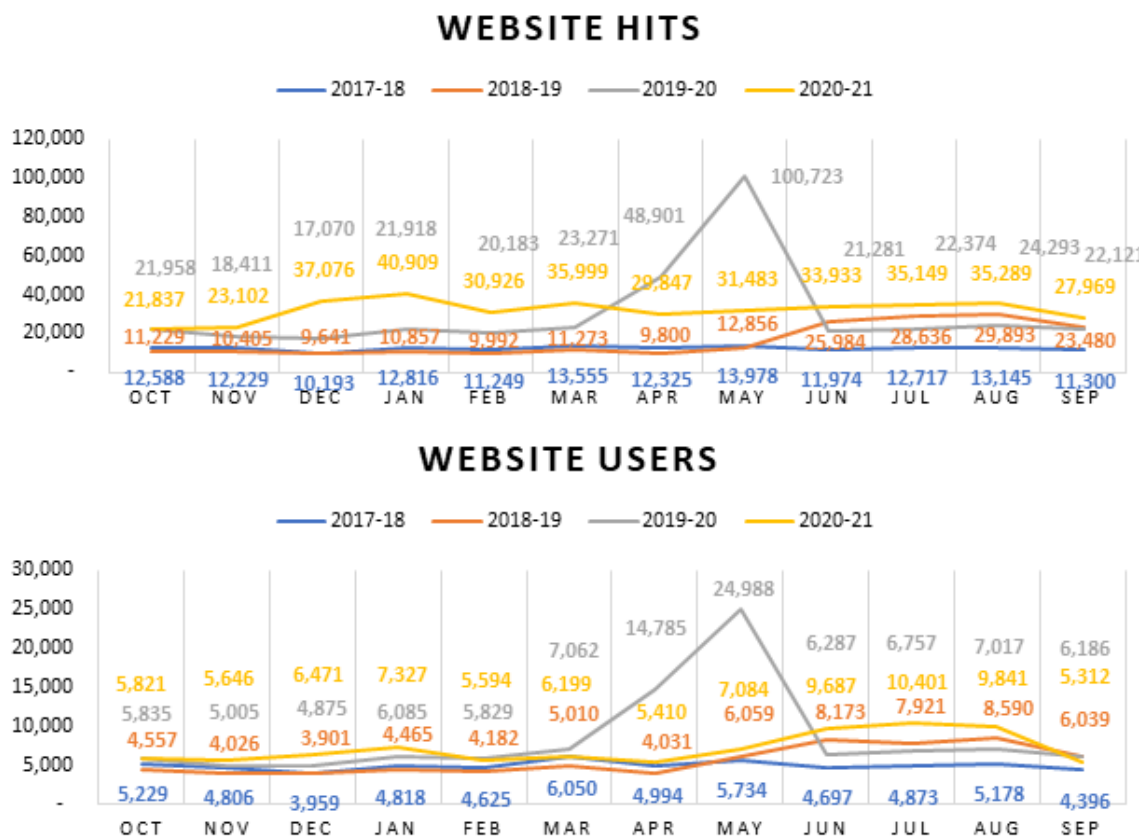
- Monitored and analyzed website analytics from Google Analytics.
- Documented calls to the dedicated phone line (implemented in March 2019).
- Documented contact forms submitted (implemented in August 2020).
- Documented appointments scheduled from the Statistics Video campaign (implemented May 2021).
- Fielded an in-office intercept survey card that was offered to visiting customers. The survey simply asked customers to mark any of the OC CSS advertisements they had heard or seen.
- Fielded a similar survey that was emailed to non-IV-A cases that opened during each project phase. The email was sent to approximately 250 parents in English and Spanish each month.

Campaign Engagement Indicators:

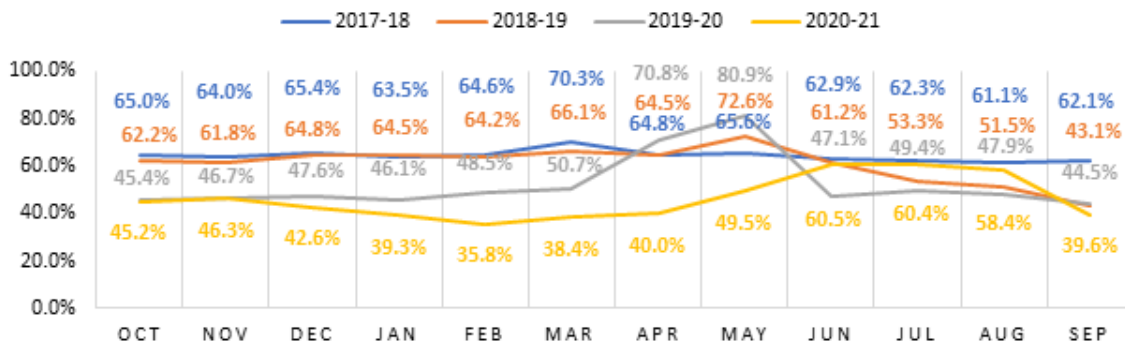
To measure campaign engagement in each intervention, OC CSS tracked landing page views, contact form submissions, calls to a phone line dedicated to the campaigns, and appointments scheduled. Landing pages were only used in interventions three and four. The landing pages for intervention three and the social media and general internet campaigns in intervention four prompted users to complete a contact form so that OC CSS staff could follow up. The landing page for the Statistics Video campaign experimented with directing users to make an appointment online after implementing the feature on our website. In addition, a dedicated phone line was provided on advertisements in interventions two, three, and four.

- 
Landing Page Views: 51,272 unique pageviews on landing pages during the run times of interventions three and four.
- 
Contact Forms Submitted: 98 contact form submissions since implementation in August 2020.
- 
Calls to the Dedicated Phone Line: 285 calls since implementation in March 2019.
- 
Appointments Scheduled (May 7-31): 96 customers scheduled appointments and reported hearing about us from our website (appointment scheduling was broadly available on our website). **6** customers scheduled appointments and reported hearing about us from social media.

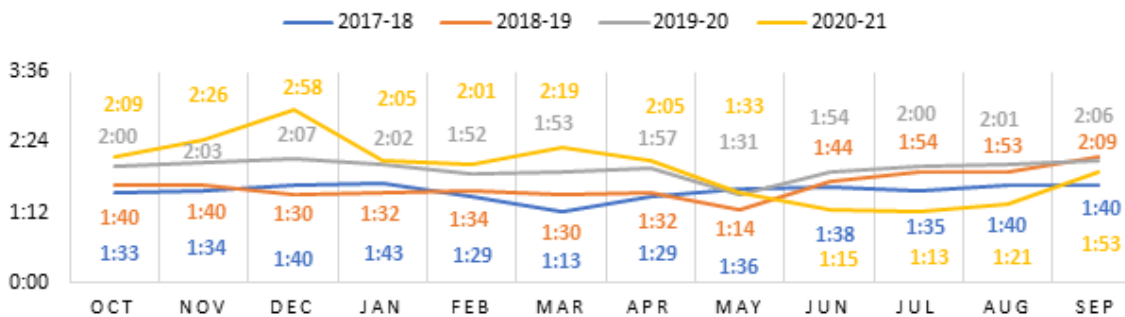
Website Analytics:



WEBSITE BOUNCE RATE



AVERAGE WEBSITE SESSION DURATION



Research Question: Was there a difference in website analytics before, during, and after the interventions?

Answer: Overall, website metrics have remained at baseline. Compared to users who visited our website after finding us on a search engine, users who clicked on our advertisements spent the shortest amount of time on our website (typically less than 15 seconds). Additionally, they tended to view only the landing page before exiting and the landing pages had a high bounce rate. Users who actively searched for child support services spent more time and viewed more pages. Low landing page views, contact form submissions, phone calls, and clicks in comparison to the reach of each campaign supports that potential customers viewing the advertisements were not compelled to take additional steps to learning more about child support services.

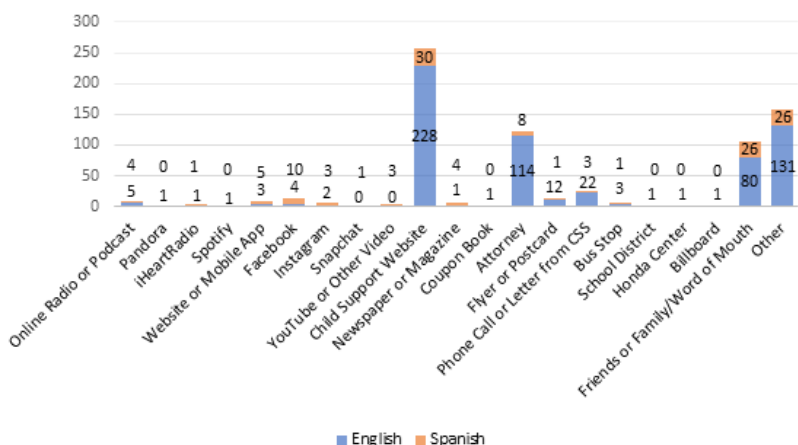
There was a significant increase in website activity during the height of the first surge of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is most likely because the federal stimulus payments disbursed in April and May of 2020 were garnished for back child support. While all indicators were atypically high, each returned to baseline after May 2020.

Note: Due to a desire to create a mobile-friendly experience for potential customers, overall website analytics were not captured for the third intervention (social media campaign from August–October 2020). Analytics for two landing pages housed on a separate, mobile-friendly County of Orange website were captured but are not represented in these charts. These analytics are included in the overall landing page views shared above.

Survey Results:

NON-IV-A EMAIL SURVEY RESULTS

N=738



Research Question: Did our new, never-assisted customers report having heard/seen our advertisements?

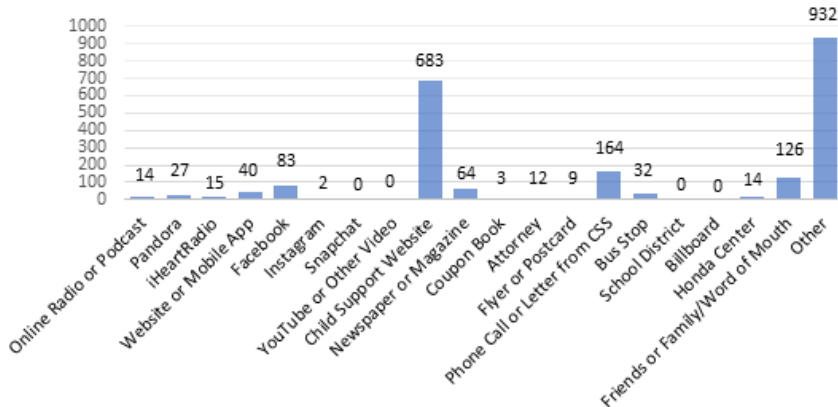
Answer: The majority of new, non-welfare case respondents did not report hearing or seeing our advertisements on social media, Pandora, iHeart Radio, or the internet advertisements. The majority of respondents reported hearing about us from our website, an attorney, friends or family or "other." Popular responses in the "other" field included variations of "friend" or "family", "court", "internet search" or "Google", "received a letter or call" from CSS, and "[non-TANF] social worker."

Research Question: Do our customers making office visits report having heard/seen our advertisements?

Answer: From our digital marketing efforts, customers visiting our office reported hearing about us from Facebook (83) and website advertisements (40) the most. Overall, the largest categories customers visiting our office reported hearing about us from were our website, ourselves (calls or letters), friends and family, or "other." Popular responses in the "other" category included reiterating hearing about us through "friends", a "phone call or letter" from CSS, and "court."

IN-OFFICE SURVEY RESULTS

N=2,220



Note: OC CSS conducted additional advertising efforts, including print advertisements and outdoor advertisements, that are captured above. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily closed our lobby, limiting in-office surveying from March-June 2020.

Analysis:

Survey results showed that the majority of respondents did not report having heard or seen our advertisements. Yet, impressions, clicks, and our click-through-rates performed well on social media overall (0.28%-1.46% compared to industry standards of 0.35%). While there were increases in website hits, those new visits were abnormally brief, with high bounce rates, short view duration, and few pages visited.

Based on these results, campaigns were successful at garnering attention, but failed to sustain that attention and generate engagement with OC CSS. It is possible that parents visiting our website were not ready or do not need our services. However, they now know about our services and can visit us when they are ready or start conversations about child support. OC CSS also tracked welfare and non-welfare case openings. Slight increases in non-welfare case openings could be easily attributed to monthly variation and/or a return to baseline after declining in the opening months of the pandemic and did not necessarily correspond with interventions one through four.



Impact of COVID-19

OC CSS Service Impacts: COVID-19 moved a large portion of our staff from full in-office work to full telecommuting work beginning in April 2020. From March–June of 2020, OC CSS closed our lobby and encouraged customers to call us for assistance. We quickly implemented the option for customers to make online video appointments which had not been available previously. Court hearings were canceled for several months and were eventually reintroduced using an online video format. This delayed numerous hearings and pushed out wait times to set court dates and orders.

Project Impacts: Instead of launching our third intervention in March 2020, we launched an intervention addressing COVID-19 and rescheduled our third intervention for August 2020. The COVID-19 intervention ran from April–June 2020 and consisted of a social media campaign and direct email marketing to current customers. We pivoted the messaging of this campaign to focus on being available to help customers and promote modifications that may be necessary due to severe changes caused by the pandemic.

 **Social Media Campaign**
Impressions: 1,168,966
Clicks: 8,620

 **Direct Email Campaign**
Emails Sent: 832
Clicks: 78

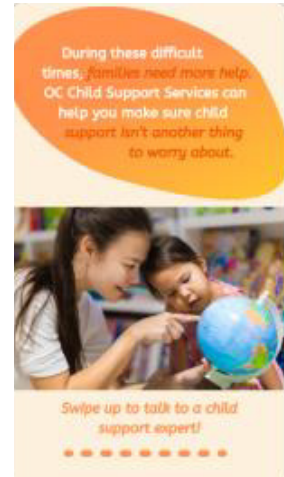
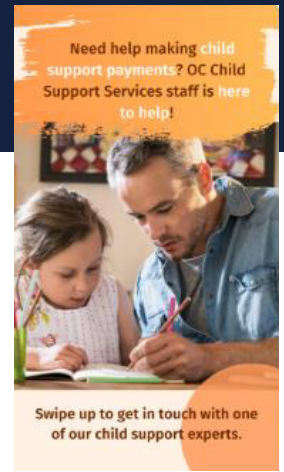
Impact on Analysis: Our Back to School and COVID-19 campaigns spoke directly to the effect of the pandemic on families and generated the lowest cost-per-click and highest click-through-rates. To verify our success, we attempted to recreate it with seasonal messaging and direct email marketing (Peachjar). Similar success was not recreated across the board and further experimentation and evaluation is needed to fully understand the effectiveness of these strategies.

During the third and fourth interventions, there were some slight increases in non-welfare case openings, however, this could be attributed to monthly variation or a return to baseline after these case openings declined in the opening months of the pandemic. For example, both non-welfare and welfare increases during intervention four.

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

Lessons Learned:

- **Flexibility:** OC CSS had previous experience with print and outdoor advertising. Digital strategies gave a large amount of flexibility that could not be attained through traditional marketing with similar reach.
- **Message to Seasonal Needs:** The success of our Back to School campaign showed us that speaking to parents' seasonal needs, like back to school supplies and clothing, could drive engagement.
- **Acknowledgment Messaging:** Just behind our Back to School campaign messaging, we found success in messaging sentiments of "you're not alone" or "don't do it by yourself" which acknowledged parents' perception of the child support process as cumbersome but provided support from our office as a solution.



Lessons Learned (Cont.):

- **Customer Self-scheduling:** Our implementation of online appointment scheduling allowed us to direct one campaign to this system. This allowed our office to manage workload impact from advertisements as it automatically distributed appointments based on time slots we designated.
- **Website Investment:** Customer survey responses indicating our website is a key source of information for new customers and the critical role landing pages played in our campaigns showed us the importance of continued investment in our website.
- **Selecting Platforms:** When selecting which platforms on which to advertise, we found the following considerations useful.
 - **Goal:** Choosing platforms based on the campaign's goal is important. For example, advertising with videos on YouTube is more effective at gaining views and impressions (raising awareness) and advertising on interactive platforms, like Facebook, is more effective at driving clicks (engagement).
 - **Start Broad:** Invest in several platforms for the same campaign. Divert funds from platforms that are not performing well (meeting the goal and defined success criteria) and invest those funds in platforms that are moving you closer to the campaign goal.
 - **Sustained Investment:** Advertising on platforms where we already had a profile and organic presence allowed us to sustain our financial investment by using our advertisements to gain followers and subscribers.
- **Videos:** Video advertisements garnered a lot of attention and engagement. Short 5-7 second videos drove just as much engagement as videos from 30 seconds to a minute long but took less resources to produce.
- **Direct Email Marketing:** Between our Peachjar and COVID-19 efforts, we saw greater engagement as a result of direct email marketing to our customers.
- **Quality Over Quantity:** As we improved our analytics, we were able to better identify which platforms were driving users to our landing pages that took action. This allowed us to invest in platforms based on engagement and not just platforms driving the largest number of users to landing pages.

Next Steps:

- **Website Investment:** OC CSS is currently planning Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies to implement in the coming year. Other website enhancements are also under consideration.
- **Increase Social Media Presence:** We are currently planning efforts to increase our organic presence on social media platforms.
- **Advertising Plan:** OC CSS will plan and implement a two-year marketing plan incorporating the lessons learned under this grant.
- **Direct Email Marketing:** We have already begun experimenting with increasing direct email marketing to our customers by promoting online appointment scheduling.
- **Execution:** This grant has significantly expanded our efforts to plan, implement, and evaluate digital marketing campaigns in the future.



**Orange County
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