Colorado Child Support Services
Digital Marketing Project
Intervention 2:
Facebook Advertising

Evaluation Report
Anne Byrne, MS
July 2020
INTERVENTION I EVALUATION REPORT: Facebook Advertising

**Grantee Agency:** Colorado Division of Child Support Services

**Date Submitted:** July 2020

**Title of Intervention:** *Facebook Advertising*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Colorado Child Support Services Program (CSS) was awarded a digital marketing demonstration grant from the Office of Child Support Enforcement to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing digital marketing to reach and attract more families to the child support program. CSS has designed and is implementing three time-bound marketing interventions including a redesign of the CSS website, Facebook sponsored advertising, and internet advertising through website remarketing and geo-fencing (location-based digital advertising).

This report is an evaluation of the second intervention, Facebook Advertising, which was implemented on January 6 and ran through March 31, 2020. The objectives for the intervention were to:

1) Increase the number of people in the target audiences that visit the CSS website and the Apply for Services page; and
2) Increase the number of child support applications submitted by 2% from baseline (a comparable period in the previous year).

Two research questions were posed in this examination of the intervention’s results:

1) How are Facebook advertisements associated with activity on the CSS Apply for Services webpage?

2) Are Facebook advertisements associated with changes to the number of applications and application-related activities such as inquiries or contacts with county offices, application downloads, and initiating applications on the website?

The evaluation included gathering and analyzing data on viewers’ responses to the advertisements, website activity, new child support applications, and county inquiry contacts.

Marketing consultant Maggie Spain of Spearca Communications led an iterative process to develop two separate Facebook advertisements. This process engaged CSS staff, the Digital
Marketing Advisory Committee, and the Department of Human Services Family Voice Council. Both advertisements posed the question “Do you need help getting child support?” One advertisement included an infographic advertising CSS as a family-focused, supportive agency. The second advertisement had a stock photo of two children accompanied by straightforward language indicating what services parents might access once they submit the child support application fee. The advertisements were demographically targeted to 62 zip codes in six participating counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver, Montrose).

The performance metrics from the advertisements indicated:

- Advertisements appeared on the Facebook feeds of 87,650 individuals.
- 1,884 responses to the call to action to visit the Apply for Services page on the CSS website.
- The two advertisements performed equally well and prompted comparable response numbers.
- Almost all Facebook-referred website users were new to the CSS website, suggesting that targeting areas with higher numbers of single parents and lower numbers of existing custodial parents was effective in reaching eligible parents new to child support.
- Once Facebook-referred users reached the CSS Apply for Services webpage, most left quickly without visiting additional pages.
- Users that remained on the website primarily navigated to pages that were enrollment related. Some also visited pages on enforcement and modifications, which may reflect further influence of the Facebook advertising content.

The number of new, non-assistance child support applications received during the intervention period was examined relative to the baseline period in an attempt to measure the influence of the Facebook advertisements. There were slightly fewer child support applications submitted during the intervention period (663) compared to the 2019 comparison period (684). Other application-related indicators also did not produce compelling evidence of the Facebook advertisement’s influence.
The Facebook Advertising intervention was effective at prompting new users to visit the CSS website. While most of these website visitors stayed on the site for only a brief period, it is possible they returned later to learn more or initiate an enrollment application. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine if this is the case from the data available. Facebook and other forms of digital marketing advertising that prompt viewers to click on a link to a website do not require much effort from the viewer. By contrast, the process of applying for child support is a complex off-line activity that requires gathering and reporting information and may take several hours to complete.

The gap between the ease of clicking on a link to a website and the task of submitting a hard-copy application for child support makes it difficult to ascertain the influence, or lack thereof, of an advertisement on Facebook. In addition, there are many other influences that contribute to the decision and timing of an application for child support, so the role of digital marketing advertising on application rates is difficult to isolate. Given these limitations, CSS should adjust its expectations for future digital marketing to focus on goals related to raising awareness about child support enrollment options rather than increasing applications or application-related activity.

One finding from the intervention evaluation was unexpected activity on a webpage related to the process of applying for child support. The activity on this page (ApplicationOptions) was not a metric of interest in the intervention itself, but suggested some child support related organic search queries were directed to this page instead of the more appropriate CSS main webpage or the Apply for Services page. Strategies to shift the search rankings of the new CSS homepage, Apply for Services page and the ApplicationOptions page should be explored to better direct viewers with general interests to the CSS homepage instead of the ApplicationOptions page. A more comprehensive solution would be to replace the ApplicationOptions and related pages with an online application platform integrated into the updated website.

CSS’s second digital marketing intervention ended on March 31, 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic exploded across the world. While the pandemic does not appear to have affected the number of applications received during this intervention, it surely will affect new
enrollments in the coming months. CSS would be well-served to revisit and update its original plans for the third digital marketing intervention in response to this crisis.

BACKGROUND

GRANT PURPOSE

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, the Digital Marketing Grant Program 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.

PROBLEM

Colorado’s child support caseload has been declining for the past few years. This aligns with national trends, which reflect that caseloads have been stagnating and declining over the past decade. In 2018, the Colorado Child Support Service (CSS) caseload was 144,827, down 6% since 2014.

CSS recently completed a three-year strategic plan, which addressed declining enrollments in several ways. The plan included an action item related to expanding and enhancing the face and public awareness of the program. Improving Colorado’s child support website to make it easier for parents to apply for and pay child support orders was identified as a key component of that action item. Other important components included utilizing social media and digital marketing to share information with potential clients about the child support program.
Together with contractors Center for Policy Research and Spearca Communications, a team from CSS, including Keri Batchelder and Amanda Terkildsen, reviewed CSS priorities, needs, and experiences with digital marketing to develop an initial plan for the digital marketing grant proposal and implementation.

Six counties were selected to continue with the intervention. These counties – Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver, and Montrose – represent a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas. An advisory committee of county board representatives, CSS staff, and the grant contractors was established, and meetings were held to refine plans for the overall project. Table 1 presents the digital marketing team, and members’ respective responsibilities.

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<tr>
<td>Keri Batchelder and Sabrina Monyoya</td>
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<td>Project Managers</td>
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<td>Amanda Terkildsen and Sabrina Monyoa</td>
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INTERVENTION GOALS

The overall goal of the digital marketing project is to increase child support applications. Specific objectives of the Facebook Advertising intervention were to:

1. Increase the number of people in the target audiences that visit the CSS website and the Apply for Services page.
2. Increase the number of child support applications submitted by 2% over a baseline of a comparable period in the previous year.

DEVELOPMENT

CSS selected social media advertising as its second digital marketing intervention. In its application, CSS stated “the second intervention seeks to determine the effectiveness of utilizing social media advertising to promote child support services and encourage enrollment”. CSS elected to specifically use Facebook advertising.

A variety of social media platforms are available for direct advertising of products and services. Facebook is the most popular social media platform among adults worldwide. According to a 2018 Pew Research Center report, two-thirds of all American adults use Facebook. What sets Facebook apart as a social media platform is its ability to provide a sense of community for users. It also provides several targeted digital advertising options ranging from boosted posts to sponsored ads in newsfeeds, sidebars, marketplace, stories, and instant messaging.

CSS uses the existing Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Facebook page to share news from the department, so this account hosted the Facebook advertisements developed for the second intervention. As of the writing of this report, the CDHS Facebook page had 4,610 likes and 5,180 followers. Spearca Communications led the development of the advertising concepts, graphic design, and content. Spearca worked with CSS staff and the CDHS.

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1 Social Media Use 2018: Demographics and Statistics, Smith & Anderson
communications team to design Facebook advertisements that were culturally relevant and in line with CDHS brand standards. The team met with CSS subject matter experts and the CDHS Family Voice Council multiple times throughout the design process. During these meetings, subject matter experts and council members gave feedback on messaging and imagery.

DESCRIPTION

The Facebook Advertising intervention involved two different creative messages directed toward the six target counties with selected populations. The advertisements were divided by county and one of the advertisements ran in each county for the entire intervention. The first creative message included a probing question – “Do you need help getting child support?” – and included text positioning CSS as a family-focused, supportive agency. The advertisement included an infographic image promoting three key child support services and a call to action to learn more. The advertisement linked to the Apply for Services page on the CSS website. Future references to this advertisement refer to it as the “Help” creative (Image 1).

Image 1. Facebook “Help” Creative
The second Facebook creative message used the same probing question – “Do you need help getting child support?” – but it was accompanied by straightforward language indicating what parents could access upon submitting the application fee. The advertisement was designed to position CSS as a more affordable alternative to private attorneys. It included a direct call to action (Apply Now) and linked to the *Apply for Services* page on the CSS website. Future references to this advertisement label this creative as “Options”.

**Image 2. Facebook “Options” Creative**

TARGET POPULATION

The targeted counties for the Colorado digital marketing project include Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver, and Montrose. In an attempt to reach Colorado residents in these areas who do not have existing child support orders with CSS, the team analyzed U.S. Census Bureau data to identify zip codes with a higher number of single parent households compared to custodial parents as identified by CSS records. The analysis identified 62 zip codes for targeting by Facebook advertisements during the second intervention (Table 2).
Table 2. Targeted Zip Codes for Facebook Advertisements

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</tbody>
</table>

The Facebook advertisements were demographically targeted to reach women in these zip codes between the ages of 30-45 with relationship statuses listed as unspecified, single, divorced, separated or “it’s complicated.” According to CSS records, most custodial parents are...
women in this age group, which informs the demographic targets for the Facebook advertisements.⁴

**TIMELINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Intervention Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/19 – 12/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6 – 3/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1 – 6/30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OUTCOME MEASURES**

The objectives of the Facebook Advertising intervention were to:

1. Increase the number of people in the target audiences that visit the CSS website and the Apply for Services page.
2. Increase the number of child support applications submitted by 2% over a baseline of a comparable period in the previous year.

Data elements used to measure outcomes included metrics from Facebook Ads Manager, website data from Google Analytics, CSS administrative data, and customer inquiry data from counties.

Facebook Ads Manager tracked the number of impressions (number of times advertisements appeared) and total reach (number of unique viewers), engagement rates (likes, comments, and shares), and the number of click throughs to the Apply for Services page on the CSS website for each advertisement.

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⁴ Colorado Child Support Services
Google Analytics supplied the data on website reach and traffic. Specific metrics include:

- **Users** – The number of new and returning people who visit a site during a set period
- **New users** – A new visitor to a site during a set period of time
- **Pageview** – An instance of a page being loaded (or reloaded) in a browser. *(Pageviews is a metric defined as the total number of pages viewed)*
- **Sessions** – The period a user is active on your site or app
- **Session duration** – The average length of a Google Analytics session in a period
- **Average pages per session** – The average number of pages viewed in a session in a period
- **Bounce rate** – The percentage of visitors to a particular website who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page.
- **Behavior flow** – A visualization of the path a user follows from page to page or from event to event
- **Application downloads** – CSS enrollment forms accessed via downloads from the website
- **Search activity** – Information on the number of times the CSS’ website appeared in an organic search and terms used for search queries

Various components, including download tracking and registration of new webpages within the CSS webpage and CSS Google Analytics, were not uniformly available prior to the intervention and thus could not be compared over time. The CSS website activated Google Analytics in late January 2019, enabled application download tracking in June 2019, and the search console feature to track search rankings in August 2019. A new landing page for child support applications, *Apply for Services*, was created with the new webpage for the last intervention, but tracking in Google Analytics was not activated until just before the launch of the Facebook advertising intervention in January 2020. As a result, a comparison period in a previous year with data derived from Google Analytics is unavailable. Instead, activity on the new application landing page, *Apply for Services*, is compared to the *ApplicationOptions* page. While this comparison has limitations, it provides a useful frame of reference.

CSS administrative data on new non-TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) applications from the targeted counties were also explored to measure outcomes. Administrative data included information on individuals who initiated a child support
application in the six participating counties for the baseline period of January 1–March 31, 2019, and the intervention period of January 1–March 31, 2020. Applications were screened to include only those applicants who were not receiving assistance (TANF) at the time of their application. Foster care and child welfare related cases initiated by counties were also excluded.

Participating counties maintained application inquiry logs as a measure of application interest and activity. Counties started logging contacts in mid-February 2019 and some continued through the intervention period. Three of the counties (Arapahoe, Boulder, and Montrose) had data for March in both 2019 and 2020; these data were included in this analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How are Facebook advertisements associated with activity on the CSS Apply for Services webpage?

2) Are Facebook advertisements associated with changes to the number of applications and application-related activities such as inquiries or contacts with county offices, application downloads, and initiating applications on the website?

RESULTS

SAMPLE SIZE

The Facebook advertisements were directed to 87,650 individual Facebook viewers across 62 zip codes in six counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver, Montrose).
INTERVENTION RESULTS

FACEBOOK ADVERTISEMENT METRICS

The Facebook advertisements reached 87,650 Facebook viewers and achieved a total of 1,201,917 impressions. Details of the advertisement metrics by county are presented in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Creative</th>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
<th>Reactions</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Shares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>207,875</td>
<td>15,345</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>240,632</td>
<td>20,684</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>251,972</td>
<td>11,987</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>103,775</td>
<td>3,190</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>253,419</td>
<td>31,498</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montrose</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>144,244</td>
<td>4,946</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,201,917</td>
<td>87,650</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two versions of the Facebook advertisements ran in separate geographic locations throughout the intervention period. For example, the Options advertisement was directed to zip codes in Adams County for the entirety of the intervention. Within the geographic divisions, the campaign was set up to deliver comparable numbers of impressions to similar size samples of viewers (reach) for each of the two versions of the advertisements (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Options Advertisement</th>
<th>Help Advertisement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impressions</td>
<td>592,751</td>
<td>609,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>40,975</td>
<td>46,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicks</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two versions of the Facebook advertisements produced a similar number of responses to the call to action (clicks), both in terms of total numbers and the rate of mean clicks relative to the advertisements’ reach and number of impressions. Both versions of the advertisements generated reactions and comments (Table 6).
Table 6. Facebook Metrics by Advertisement Version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Options Advertisement</th>
<th>Help Advertisement</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Clicks</strong></td>
<td>938</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>1,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Clicks by Reach</strong></td>
<td>40.63</td>
<td>41.57</td>
<td>41.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean Clicks by Impression</strong></td>
<td>.15%</td>
<td>.15%</td>
<td>.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internet advertising company Wordstream compiled benchmarks for Facebook advertising by industry and determined that the average click-through rate of Facebook advertisements (number of clicks/number of impressions) across all industries is .90%. CSS’s Facebook advertisements click-through rate was .15%, which is much lower than the Wordstream benchmark. Wordstream’s benchmarking does not include government or social services advertising, so its value in comparing to CSS’s Facebook advertisements is limited, but Wordstream’s benchmarking is one of only a few readily available sources of information. Commercial advertising focused on selling products, which is largely what the Wordstream benchmarks report, is quite different than the advertisements used in this intervention. For one thing, the Wordstream benchmarks include remarketing advertisements, where viewers are presented with an advertisement for a product previously viewed on Facebook or through an internet browser, so the advertisements are in effect following up on viewers previously demonstrated interest, which was not the case with this intervention’s advertisements. In addition, the decision to apply and the complex process of completing a child support application is a much different activity than making a purchase, which is the goal of other advertisements included in Wordstream’s benchmarking. Advertisements encouraging enrollment in services like child support inherently may not lend themselves to higher click-through rates.

As shown in Table 7, the advertisements were displayed more often in the zip codes of less populous counties. In Boulder, Delta, and Montrose counties, the advertisements were displayed an average of 21-33 times on viewers’ Facebook newsfeeds. By contrast, the
advertisements displayed in the newsfeeds of viewers in zip codes within the larger counties of Adams, Arapahoe, and Denver were displayed an average of 8-14 times. The rate of responses to the call to action (clicks) decreased with more exposure. While this could suggest that advertisements displayed fewer times produce better results, there is a correlation between the number of clicks per exposure and the reach of the sample, with smaller samples producing fewer clicks, r(6) = .991, p = .000; significant at the 0.01 level. As a result, no conclusions on the rate of response to the call to action relative to the number of exposures can be drawn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Advertisement Version</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Average number of times ad displayed</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
<th>Average clicks by number of times ad displayed</th>
<th>Clicks by Reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>15,345</td>
<td>13.55</td>
<td>342.00</td>
<td>25.25</td>
<td>44.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>20,684</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>410.00</td>
<td>35.24</td>
<td>50.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>11,987</td>
<td>21.02</td>
<td>305.00</td>
<td>14.51</td>
<td>39.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>3,190</td>
<td>32.53</td>
<td>151.00</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>21.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>31,498</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>490.00</td>
<td>60.90</td>
<td>64.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montrose</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>4,946</td>
<td>29.16</td>
<td>186.00</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>26.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facebook viewers have the option to record a reaction to an advertisement or post. As shown in Table 8, a total of 138 reactions were recorded in response to the Facebook advertisements, which is few relative to the reach of the advertisements (.16%). Seventy-eight percent (111) of the reactions were positive, either “like” or “love”. Five reactions were angry, and 22 were “haha.”
Table 8. Reactions to Facebook Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Advertisement Version</th>
<th>Love</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Haha</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>Help</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montrose</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments viewers made in response to the advertisements were recorded. CSS chose to proactively follow-up on comments by determining if the individual making the comment had an active case and, if so, forwarding the comment to the county serving the respective client so follow-up could be conducted. A total of 22 comments were made by 16 individuals, with three viewers commenting twice (Table 9). Most comments (59%) were made by individuals without a child support case in Colorado. However, 36% of commenters did have active cases. Comments were sorted into 7 categories based on content. Forty-one percent (9) of the comments were statements about how child support is ineffective. According to CSS records, 4 of these comments were made by individuals without an active case, 3 had cases where the non-custodial parent has not been located, and 2 comments were made by individuals with active cases and recent payment activity. Overall, the rate of comments (.02%) was small relative to the reach of the advertisements.
Table 9. Comments to Facebook Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Comment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of comments</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of individuals making comments</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question about process</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative comment about child support services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child support is ineffective statement</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to previous comment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-custodial parent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to advertisement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanks for services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Status of Commenters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active case</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed case</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No case</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WEBSITE ACTIVITY INDICATORS**

Google Analytics is a tracking feature that compiles multiple metrics related to website activity. While Google Analytics provides robust information on many aspects of website activity, it is not possible to completely align metrics with another source such as Facebook Ads Manager. Google Analytics tracking relies on the user having Java, images, and cookies enabled. It is further limited by the fact that users can exit before the tracking code in Google Analytics is able to load. In some cases, Google Analytics uses sampled data to report its metrics, which limits alignment with other sources. Even with these limitations, Google Analytics is a useful tool for gathering information on activity trends of websites and individual pages within a website.

*Facebook-Referred Activity Metrics*

Metrics for the Facebook intervention period (January 6–March 31, 2020) were compiled from Google Analytics and reviewed to illustrate website activity related to the Facebook advertisements. Facebook viewers who clicked on an advertisement were directed to the *Apply for Services* page on the CSS website. Facebook Ad Manager indicated that there were 1,884
click throughs to this page from the advertisements; Google Analytics showed that there were 787 Facebook advertisement referrals.

As shown in Table 10, almost all the sessions (88%) on the new Apply for Services landing page were directly referred by the Facebook advertisements. Ninety-four percent of the sessions started through a Facebook referral were from users who were new to the CSS website. Sessions averaged 1.54 pages and lasted an average of 26 seconds. The bounce rate (percent of viewers who leave site after viewing this page) was 57% for the Apply for Services page overall, and 71% for the Facebook referred sessions. The overall bounce rate of the Apply for Services page is consistent with benchmarks provided by CXL for government sites (55.06%), but the Facebook-referred bounce rate exceeds both this metric and the average benchmark for social media referred sessions (54%). These data suggest that most Facebook-referred sessions were from new users whose sessions were brief in duration and consisted of only visiting the Apply for Services page.

### Table 10. Referral Sources and Session Characteristics Apply for Services Webpage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>% of Total Sessions</th>
<th>% New Sessions</th>
<th>New Users</th>
<th>Bounce Rate</th>
<th>Pages / Session</th>
<th>Avg. Session Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>88.03%</td>
<td>93.77%</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>70.90%</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>25.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.82%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73.08%</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>58.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.69%</td>
<td>69.70%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.61%</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>402.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.57%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>255.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>115.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>85.12%</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>56.86%</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td></td>
<td>146.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Apply for Services Page Metrics**

Since the Google Analytics tracking feature for the Apply for Services page was activated just prior to the intervention, there is not a retrospective period that could be used as a baseline and compared to the intervention period. It is helpful, however, to have some basis of comparison. In the evaluation for the first intervention (New Website), metrics on the ApplicationOptions (also referred to as the Eapplication page) webpage were used to illustrate

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the comparison of webpage activity between the intervention and a baseline period. Activity associated with each, and occurring during the intervention period, was compared to provide some form of reference.

Both the Apply for Services and ApplicationOptions pages address enrolling in child support. The Apply for Services page provides general information about the process of applying for child support. It also provides access to the full suite of navigational tools built into the new website, including the “Apply” box, which takes viewers to the ApplicationOptions page.

Image 3. Apply for Services Webpage

The ApplicationOptions page is accessible from most of the pages on the DSS webpage by clicking on the “Apply” box. Unlike other pages within the website, the ApplicationOptions page was not updated during the first intervention as there are navigational requirements from the ApplicationOptions page that limited the ability to update it. The page provides detailed information and tools so individuals can start the process of applying for child support. Viewers are taken through a series of pages that screen potential applicants by county and set out clear parameters and expectations for CSS services. Viewers can download application forms, get contact information for county offices, and begin to fill out an application online that can then be downloaded and submitted to a county office (an online child support application submission option is not currently available). The full suite of navigational tools available on other pages in the CSS website is not available on the ApplicationOptions page.
While sessions that began on either page may include visits to the other page, the metrics presented from landing page sessions do not include session duplications. In other words, if a session began on the Apply for Services page and included a visit to the ApplicationOptions page, this session activity is recorded only as a part of the Apply for Services landing page metrics and not the ApplicationOptions landing page metrics. This comparison provides a frame of reference for activity on the two sites. However, few firm conclusions can be drawn as viewers may visit both pages and the pages have different user navigation options (ApplicationOptions has limited navigational capacity) or referral sources (Facebook advertisements only referred to the Apply for Services page).

The comparison of metrics for the two pages begins with Table 11. Since most of the landing page activity (86%) on the Apply for Services page originated with a referral from the Facebook advertisements, landing page activity on the Apply for Services page serves as a proxy for Facebook-related activity. The metrics suggest that the Apply for Services page had a higher rate of sessions by new users (85%) than the ApplicationOptions page (55%). There were fewer
sessions on the Apply for Services page (14%) that continued to a second page than the ApplicationOptions page (37%).

Table 11. Comparison of Apply for Services and ApplicationOptions Webpages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Webpage</th>
<th>Number of Sessions</th>
<th>Referred by Facebook</th>
<th>% Facebook Referral</th>
<th>New Users</th>
<th>% New Users Sessions</th>
<th>Sessions Arrived</th>
<th>Sessions Dropped Off</th>
<th>% Viewers Remaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply for Services</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>85.54%</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>84.89%</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>13.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ApplicationOptions</td>
<td>3,823</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.58%</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>54.72%</td>
<td>3,823</td>
<td>2,092</td>
<td>36.62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While most of the sessions referred by Facebook ended on the Apply for Services page, some sessions continued to other pages. The characteristics of these sessions were examined and compared to the sessions that started with the ApplicationOptions page. The sessions that extended beyond the landing page for three interactions for both pages were compared in the Behavior Flow function in Google Analytics (Table 12). Again, the comparison is limited. The pages visited were categorized into 6 groups: application related, referral to local county office (possibly also application related), existing cases, return to the main webpage, enforcement or modification related, and logging into the Family Services Register (FSR).

Most activity on both pages was application related. Sessions that began on the Apply for Services page had a higher rate of visits (6%) to pages related to modification or enforcement than the ApplicationOptions page (1%). This may be reflective of the Facebook advertisement content on the range of CSS services available, including enforcement and changing an existing order. Applications for child support are submitted to counties, so the higher rate of county referral activity for the Apply for Services page (11%) compared to the ApplicationOptions page (4%) could suggest that there was more application related activity on the Apply for Services page. Correspondingly, sessions that started with the ApplicationOptions page included more activity on pages not related to the application process, such as existing cases, the main page, and logging into the FSR.
Table 12. Comparison of Webpage Behavior Flow Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 6–March 31, 2020</th>
<th>Apply for Services</th>
<th>ApplicationOptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pages Viewed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Percent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pages Viewed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>61.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Referral</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing case</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Page</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement/ Modification</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log in to FSR</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While both pages’ metrics demonstrated viewing activities related to the application process, it appears that users who continued from the *Apply for Services* landing page viewed pages more focused on the application process than those that began on the *ApplicationOptions* page. The comparison is of limited value, given the constraints described, but the amount of page view activity on non-application related pages by those who started on the *ApplicationOptions* page is notable by itself. The *ApplicationOptions* page has limited value as a starting page for anything but the application process. There are no navigational arrows on the page and the only way to arrive at other content area pages is by manipulating the address in the address bar, which is a cumbersome process. This raises the question: Why did so many users start their sessions on the *ApplicationOptions* page (with its limitations) if their interests were not on application-related issues?

**Search Engine Metrics**

Non-application related activity on the *ApplicationOptions* page might be explained, in part, by the role of search engines in directing viewers to the page. During the intervention period the *ApplicationOptions* page had an average search position rating of 3.28 on multiple child support-related terms. This means that the page was listed near the top of the list of website options generated through an organic internet search using common child support terms (Table 13).
Table 13. Search Console Metrics for ApplicationOptions Webpage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Query</th>
<th>Impressions</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
<th>CTR</th>
<th>Average Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>colorado child support</td>
<td>38,320</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child support colorado</td>
<td>17,099</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child support</td>
<td>8,647</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co child support</td>
<td>1,979</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>denver child support</td>
<td>1,658</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>childsupport</td>
<td>1,355</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child support colorado springs</td>
<td>1,265</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>8.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colorado child support enforcement</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colorado springs child support</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>childsupport.state.co.us</td>
<td>1,148</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total/Average</strong></td>
<td>98,396</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By contrast, the Apply for Services page did not generate any results from search queries, likely due to it being new. Interestingly, during the intervention period, the ApplicationOptions page had a much better position rating (3.28) than did the CSS main webpage (18.38) with similar search terms (Tables 13 & 14). The reason the ApplicationOptions page had a higher position rating than the CSS main website is beyond the scope of this analysis, but one possible influence, according to marketing consultant Maggie Spain from Spearca Communications, is that many Colorado county child support websites link to the ApplicationOptions page rather than the CSS main page. Links from other pages drive up Search Console ratings, as does historical activity, so longevity of the ApplicationOptions page relative to the new CSS main homepage is also a factor.
The high search ranking for the ApplicationOptions page and the amount of non-application related activity on the page suggest this is an issue that needs attention. Some viewers seeking general information on child support are being directed to the ApplicationOptions page instead of the broader CSS main webpage. The CSS main webpage offers clear navigation tools to a variety of child support topics and is intended to direct viewers to what they need; the ApplicationOptions page is not set up to do this.

While this issue is not specific to the Facebook Advertising intervention examined here, it is relevant to CSS’ digital marketing project as a whole. The back-end technological requirements of the ApplicationOptions page and the pages that follow were not compatible with the updates of the overall website update (first digital marketing intervention), so the ApplicationOptions and related pages are operating in a somewhat parallel way to the overall CSS website. The search ranking issue described here is one consequence of this dynamic. While efforts could be made to shift the search rankings for the CSS main webpage and the ApplicationOptions page, a more comprehensive fix would be to update the ApplicationOptions and related pages with an online application platform that could work seamlessly within the CSS website. CSS has
expressed interest in creating an online application platform, and this issue supports the need for the development of an online platform.

**CHILD SUPPORT APPLICATION ACTIVITY OVERVIEW**

*Child Support Applications Initiated*

The number of child support applications submitted, along with other indicators of application related activity, including inquiries and contacts to county offices, were examined in the evaluation for the Facebook Advertisement Intervention.

While the intention of this intervention was to increase child support and modification applications, the actual relationship between the intervention and application rates cannot be determined in the absence of an experimental research design. Instead, application-related information is examined for evidence that might suggest a relationship between the intervention and application-related activities, such as applications received, application downloads, applications initiated on the website and rates of inquiries.

The number of total child support applications received during the intervention period (663) was slightly less than during the baseline period. Denver County had the largest number of applications in both periods while Delta County had the fewest. Adams and Denver counties had more applications in the intervention period compared to baseline and the other counties had fewer applications. These data are shown in Table 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Baseline N=684</th>
<th>Intervention N=663</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapahoe</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>-24</td>
<td>-11.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-20.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montrose</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-5.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Child Support Applications Submitted</strong></td>
<td><strong>684</strong></td>
<td><strong>663</strong></td>
<td><strong>-21</strong></td>
<td><strong>-3.07%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Comparison of Child Support Applications Submitted (Administrative Data)
The characteristics of child support applicants and family qualities were very similar in the baseline and intervention periods. The mean age of custodial parents was 36 in the baseline period and 35 in the intervention period. As shown in Tables 16 & 17, most were female, and 65% of parents in both periods were never married. The mean number of children in both periods was 1.4. There were more non-custodial parent applicants during the intervention period (30) than the baseline period (18) and the percent of fathers as custodial parents increased slightly during the intervention period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16. Characteristics of Child Support Applicants by Period (Administrative Data)</th>
<th>Baseline n=684</th>
<th>Intervention n=663</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of Custodial Parent</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Female Applicants</td>
<td>583/87.8%</td>
<td>563/88.7%</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-3.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Male Applicants</td>
<td>81/12.2%</td>
<td>72/11.3%</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant was Custodial Parent (CP)</td>
<td>666/97.4%</td>
<td>632/95.3%</td>
<td>-34</td>
<td>-5.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant was Non-Custodial Parent (NCP)</td>
<td>18/2.6%</td>
<td>30/4.5%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17. Family Characteristics of Child Support Cases (Administrative Data)</th>
<th>Baseline N=684</th>
<th>Intervention N=663</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Number of Children per Case</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age of Child(ren)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP is Father</td>
<td>63/6.2%</td>
<td>88/6.9%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP is Mother</td>
<td>565/82.6%</td>
<td>545/82.2%</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-3.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP is Relative or Guardian</td>
<td>48/7%</td>
<td>51/7.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Cases with Never Married Parents</td>
<td>448/65.5%</td>
<td>427/64.4%</td>
<td>-21</td>
<td>-4.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application Form Downloads

Eleven applications were downloaded from the website from sessions that began on the Apply for Services page, based on referrals from the Facebook advertisements (Table 18). Sessions that began on the Apply for Services page (1.19%) were less likely to result in the download of an application form than those that began on the Application Options page (10.38%).
Table 18. Application Downloads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Webpage</th>
<th>Starting Sessions</th>
<th>Application Downloads</th>
<th>Downloads as Percent of Starting Sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply for Services</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eapplication</td>
<td>3,823</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>10.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applications Initiated on the Website

Table 19 shows that there were more applications initiated on the website in the intervention period than the baseline period, but the number of web-initiated applications in both periods was small relative to the total number of applications initiated.

Table 19. Web Initiated Applications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline Period</th>
<th>Intervention Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Total Applications</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application Inquiries

The number of application-related inquiries, or contacts, to select counties as recorded through individual county logs decreased from the period of March 2019 to March 2020 (Table 20). The overall number of inquiries also decreased by close to 1000 contacts. While this could be interpreted as a decrease in application-related activity, it could also mean that more individuals got the information they needed on the website. However, neither conclusion can be drawn from the data available. The data here are limited by the diversity of county protocols for responding to application-related inquiries and recording the contacts. Some counties have dedicated staff responding to inquiries. Others delegate this responsibility to multiple staff members.
### Table 20. County Child Support Application-Related Inquires by Period (Contact Log Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total County Log Inquiries</td>
<td>2,779</td>
<td>1,824</td>
<td>-955</td>
<td>-34.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Walk-in Inquiries</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>-277</td>
<td>-40.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Telephone Inquiries</td>
<td>2,020</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>-638</td>
<td>-31.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Inquiries</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-126</td>
<td>-66.67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the three counties supplying contact logs, most individuals who contacted the office were female custodial parents. Payment related questions were the most common issues of inquiry (Table 21).

### Table 21. Selected Characteristics from Contact Logs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of Individual, or Inquiry</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54.54%</td>
<td>55.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial Parent</td>
<td>53.44%</td>
<td>53.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment Related</td>
<td>55.28%</td>
<td>56.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Information</td>
<td>12.54%</td>
<td>13.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Information</td>
<td>20.97%</td>
<td>13.56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ANALYSIS**

The first research question was: **How are Facebook advertisements associated with activity on the CSS Apply for Services webpage?**

The Facebook Advertising intervention reached 87,650 Facebook viewers, prompting 1,884 responses to the call to action (clicks) that led viewers to the *Apply for Services* page of the CSS website. The two versions of the advertisement performed similarly, with no significant difference between responses to the advertisements. Over 90% of users that visited the CSS website by clicking on the Facebook advertisements were new users to the site, suggesting that the advertising targeting method was effective in reaching individuals interested in but not currently engaged with CSS.

Once users reached the *Apply for Services* page, most left quickly without exploring other pages on the website. For those that did visit other pages, activity was primarily application related. While the advertisements encouraged visits to the CSS website, the short duration of visits did not lend itself to gathering much information about the process of applying.
Facebook and other forms of digital marketing advertising that prompt viewers to click on a link to a website do not require much effort from the viewer. By contrast, the process of applying for child support is a complex off-line activity that requires gathering and reporting information. It may take several hours to accomplish. The gap between the ease of clicking on a link to a website and the task of actually submitting a hard-copy application for child support makes it difficult to ascertain the influence, or lack thereof, of an advertisement on Facebook. The very limited amount of time Facebook-referred users spent on the CSS website on application related material could suggest that this type of advertising is not effective in prompting individuals to apply for child support. It is also possible that the Facebook-referred website visit was the first step of a multi-step process of deciding to enroll in child support. It is not possible to draw either conclusion from the data available.

Facebook advertisements do appear to be associated with increased activity on the CSS Apply for Services webpage but most activity was short in duration. Facebook-referred visitors to the Apply for Services page were largely new visitors to the CSS website.

The second research question was: Are Facebook advertisements associated with changes to the number of applications and application-related activities such as inquiries or contacts with county offices, application downloads, and initiating applications on the website?

The number of new applications received during the intervention period (663) was slightly less than those received in the same period in 2019 (684). The Facebook advertisements prompted 11 application downloads and the number of applications that were initiated on the website increased from 5 in the baseline period to 15 during the intervention period. An analysis of contact logs from counties showed an overall decrease in contacts across all subjects, including application-related inquiries. However, the small number of individuals (50) who did not leave the website at once did not lend itself to analysis of web-based application initiation.
It is not possible to associate any metrics about application form downloads with the Facebook advertisements, and it is therefore not possible to answer this research question.

LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

LESSONS LEARNED

The Facebook advertisements reached and prompted a response from the targeted population of individuals eligible for but not using child support services. If this population remains the priority for outreach, the geographic targeting based on the number of single parents relative to the current number of custodial parents is a useful strategy to continue using. The two versions of the advertisements prompted similar responses, suggesting that they were equally effective at producing the desired response. Using similar design and content elements in future advertisements would likely produce similar response rates.

The Facebook advertising intervention was effective at prompting new users to visit the CSS website. While most of these website visitors stayed on the site for only a brief period, they may have returned later to learn more or start an enrollment application. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine if this is the case from the data available. The gap between the ease of clicking on a link and actually submitting a hard-copy application for child support makes it difficult to ascertain the influence, or lack thereof, of an advertisement on Facebook. Given these limitations, CSS should adjust its expectations for future digital marketing to raising awareness on the option of enrolling in child support, instead of actually increasing applications or application-related activity.

The other application activity metrics (downloads, web-initiated applications, and county inquiries) did not produce data useful to forming conclusions. The overall number of application downloads and web-initiated applications will continue to be useful as reflections of the updated website and should be continued. The county inquiry logs reflect different protocols and priorities and are of limited value in
measuring application-related activity and should be discontinued in the third intervention.

The comparison of activity on the Apply for Services and ApplicationOptions pages led to an unexpected discovery about the use of the ApplicationOptions page. While this webpage was not a focus of this intervention, the implications of its use, as illustrated through Google Analytics data, are important to the overall digital marketing project and website accessibility. When individuals search the internet for child support services using common child support terms, the ApplicationOptions page is sometimes listed before the CSS homepage. This could prompt individuals interested in general information to visit the ApplicationOptions page instead of the CSS homepage. The ApplicationOptions page is not intended to serve as a landing page. It does not have the same navigational tools as other pages so effort should be made to direct viewers to the CSS homepage instead. One promising strategy to explore would be encouraging county child support agencies to link to the CSS homepage instead of the ApplicationOptions page. A more comprehensive fix would be to replace the ApplicationOptions page and the pages that follow with an online application platform, integrated into the update CSS website. CSS has expressed interest in developing this platform and the experience with the ApplicationOptions page described here provides evidence for the need for a new online application platform.

Next Steps

The second intervention, Facebook Advertising, ended on March 31, 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic became an international health concern. As of the end of June, public-facing child support offices in many areas across the state remain closed to in-person interaction. The third intervention, website remarketing and geofencing advertising, was scheduled to launch in July 2020 but has been delayed until further notice. Significant health concerns, skyrocketing job losses, and the need for social distancing demand the focus and attention of all. Concern that child support advertising would likely get lost among these dynamics prompted the decision to delay the third intervention.

When planning resumes for the third intervention, there are several lessons from the Facebook Advertising Intervention to apply:
1. The original objectives for the third intervention should be updated to eliminate expected increases in child support applications, as it is not possible to associate digital marketing with application rates. CSS should adjust its expectations for future digital marketing interventions to goals related to raising awareness about child support enrollment options instead of increasing applications or application-related activity.

2. The design and advertising content used in the Facebook advertisements appears to prompt responses from the targeted population, so similar features could be applied to future advertisements with an expectation of similar response rates.

3. Website viewers who use general child support terms in organic searches should be directed to the CSS main webpage instead of the ApplicationOptions page when possible. One strategy that could prove effective in this effort would be to encourage county child support agencies to link to the CSS main webpage instead of the ApplicationOptions page. A more comprehensive strategy would be to replace the ApplicationOptions page and the pages that follow with an integrated online application process.

Circumstances in Colorado and across the world are very different than when original plans for the digital marketing project were made. Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are and will continue to be widespread. Next steps for the CSS digital marketing project should include consideration of issues related to the pandemic. In particular:

1. The original digital marketing project goal of increasing applications should be revisited for the third intervention. Since the overall digital marketing project also includes reaching families served by child support, it might be useful to consider if there are important messages to deliver to current clients through digital marketing. For example, widespread unemployment caused by the pandemic will likely influence non-custodial parents’ ability to make timely payments. Messages to these parents on strategies for managing their child support obligations may be helpful to avoiding arrears and enforcement actions.

2. It is not yet possible to enroll in child support online through the CSS website. Viewers can go through multiple steps on the website to fill out an application,
but the forms must ultimately be printed and submitted in hard copy to initiate the enrollment process. In the past, many of the applications have been submitted in person at county office, an option not currently available in many places across the state. Establishing online enrollment is a complex process, but one worthy of attention. The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted many business interactions and transactions to online and demonstrates the critical need for this resource.