



CHEROKEE NATION
Child Support Services

CHEROKEE NATION – FINAL BRIEF

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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 to research 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.

The Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services (CNOCSS) was one of the 14 recipients to receive funding to implement strategies that would test varying digital marketing approaches. The program envisioned utilizing the grant opportunity to develop a digital media platform presence, thereby contributing to the overall awareness of the program's services. By creating a web presence to expand upon, the program could then contribute to the foundation by developing an array of outreach materials, which could be used to educate tribal reservation communities. In addition, Cherokee Nation also anticipated using grant funding to improve direct communication methods with current program participants by incorporating a more modern way of interacting with them.

PROBLEMS

CNOCSS began providing child support services in July 2007. During the first few years of the program, the staff spent time learning as much as they could about child support, identifying & building successful enforcement capabilities, building solid processes, and developing a plan for the cases transferred to the program. When the program initially opened, the caseload comprised existing cases transferred from another tribal IV-D agency to CNOCSS. Incoming case applications were considered low in frequency during the first 5 years of the program. The incoming application count was 353 applications for 2018- the fiscal year before receiving the grant. The program wanted to create awareness that would lend to an increase in the incoming application count. Upon learning of the grant opportunity announcement, the program determined that outreach activities reflected merely a brochure to provide to the public at tribal community meetings and for distribution throughout other Cherokee Nation programs and offices. The program director put out a survey to child support staff requesting them to provide ideas on technological activities that could engage the communities and clients. The program wanted to create tools using the

grant that would assist in bringing awareness about the program and the services it provided and help drive engagement with current clients.

The program recognized another pertinent reason for the slow build of interest in the program. The state of Oklahoma IV-D program had already built up a solid child support program that had been in existence for at least three decades when the CNOCSS office opened. The state of Oklahoma also had established child support offices throughout the reservation boundaries of Cherokee Nation, so the state's program may already service the eligible families. Because child support services usually remain with the office that opened their case, the program knew they needed to provide easily accessible information to garner attention to the program.

Finally, the program wanted to provide another avenue to communicate with active clients and use up-to-date methods instead of solely relying on phone calls, office visits, and general mail. These three communication platforms had served their purpose, and the program staff knew there was undoubtedly a large population who had access to smartphones. If they were going to be using their smartphone to access our website and view our educational tools and program information, they could use this same instrument to communicate directly with program staff. Incorporating text messaging through cell phones would lend to better two-way communication between clients and office staff. If the program could extend the reach capabilities of current clients, then perhaps, there could be improved dialogue with clients about the program and their particular case.

The CNOCSS program certainly needed to catch up by first understanding what technological methods and social media platforms were available. The program wanted to expand its outreach using social media and technology tools by applying for the Digital Media grant. By adding on to their technological platforms, they would distribute general information and communicate with clients. The capabilities using technology could boost awareness throughout the Cherokee Nation reservation boundaries, contribute to an improved understanding of the program's services, and finally lend to increased contacts between active clients and their case managers.

The program had a unique position in that it had not yet begun any extensive community outreach campaigns during the first ten years of being an IV-D program. There was no developed website page and one tri-fold brochure. The program knew that any development completed with this grant would likely result in positive outcomes of the Cherokee Nation general public becoming familiar with the child support program. The Digital Marketing grant allowed the program to learn new lessons in this uncharted territory of digital media usage. The program included in the grant plan ample time for the child support staff who were going to be part of the core workgroup on the grant to educate themselves more about digital media platforms. The CNOCSS program workgroup staff had a significant learning curve in regards to learning about media and marketing. Nonetheless, program staff can now assist in future planning in outreach initiatives and have already been working on future projects.

INTERVENTION 1 – CREATE A WEB PRESENCE

The first Intervention focused on building a website platform that could be regularly used to provide information about the program. In July 2019, the program launched the new website with a dedicated URL with informative and helpful information about the program. The website included a short video overview of the program's services as a method to capture attention to the website. The video was titled *Child Support Services*. The program evaluated the website views that occurred during the first three months of launching the website (July 2019- September 2019) and incoming applications and office contacts. The target population for this Intervention was the public of the Cherokee Nation communities and any existing child support staff and clientele.

INTERVENTION 2 – IMPLEMENT A DIGITAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The second Intervention was geared to provide a series of educational videos on a digital media platform regularly used throughout the Cherokee Nation reservation boundaries. The Cherokee Nation Communications Division ensured the program was using the most popular social media platform within the Cherokee population, Facebook, to roll out each Intervention. The first video, *Child Support 101*, was rolled out via the Cherokee Nation Facebook page on January 2, 2020. The second video, *Genetic Testing*, launched on February 2, 2020, on the CN Facebook page. The third video, *What to Expect @Court*, launched on March 2, 2020, also with the CN Facebook page. The program then evaluated the effectiveness of each video by reviewing the actual video play-through counts and how many times the videos were clicked on to at least view it initially. Each video respectively played for one entire month. The program also continued to evaluate the count of incoming applications and office contacts. The target population for this Intervention was the public of the Cherokee Nation communities and any existing child support staff and clientele. The program requested that the videos be targeted to viewers in the northern counties encompassing the Cherokee Nation reservation but was of course for anyone who viewed the Cherokee Nation Facebook site.

INTERVENTION 3 - UTILIZE WIRELESS COMMUNICATION

The third and final intervention goal was to utilize a text messaging service to try and engage clients through a new two-way communication method instead of only using phone calls, emails, and letter correspondence. The target population included randomly selected existing paternity establishment cases, general enforcement, and locate/bench warrant

caseloads. The demonstration period for Intervention Three started March 1, 2021, and concluded on May 31, 2021. The grant workgroup reviewed response patterns once a text had been sent, the demographics of those who responded, payment patterns of the selected cases, incoming application counts, and office contacts during the demonstration period.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions wanting to answer in Intervention One were:

- 1) How does a rebranded, accessible webpage affect the number of contacts made through the CN OCSS website?
- 2) How does a rebranded, accessible webpage affect the number of new families serviced by the CN OCSS?

The questions wanted to answer in Intervention Two were:

- 1) Using advertising Facebook products, would the educational videos reach at least 500 video views every 30 days?
- 2) Does social media advertising affect child support awareness as evidenced through enrollment and office contacts with an increase of at least 1% of the data totals?
- 3) Does the use of social media advertising of educational videos affect the CNOCSS overall website traffic?

The questions wanted to answer in Intervention Three were:

- 1) What is the response rate for each client sent a text? Did they respond to every text, and how quickly did they respond?
- 2) What type of effect does the utilization of text messaging have on the case manager's contact counts each month? Is there an increase of at least 1%?
- 3) What type of effect does the utilization of text messaging have on the non-custodial parties who agree to text as far as there is at least one payment occurring during the 90 days for each non-custodial party who opts in to texting?
- 4) Compared to the same blocks of time from the previous calendar year, are there any differences in the incoming application count during the demonstration project timeframes?
- 5) In regards to the case managers who texted, what was their experience in regards to utilizing texting?

OUTCOME

The Outcomes measured for all three interventions focused primarily on the overall incoming application numbers, the overall client contacts the program staff completed, and the overall cases reported at the end of each fiscal year. In reviewing those particular datasets, the outcomes indicate that during each Intervention, those numbers continued a steady increase. Before the grant interventions started in 2019, there were 353 total incoming applications at the end of 2018. At the end of the fiscal year 2021, there were a total of 866 incoming applications. This is a 145% increase of incoming applications since the onset of the Digital Marketing Grant. The total number of client contacts before the grant interventions was 30,681 for fiscal year 2018. In FY 2021, the total number of client contacts was 31,652. This represents a 3.11% increase in overall client contacts. Finally, the number of cases opened during the fiscal year was 2,531, and at the close of FY 2021, the total number of cases opened was 2,950. These numbers represent a 16.5547% increase in cases since receiving the digital marketing grant. These numbers indicate that the program overall is reaching more clients in the community.

RESULTS

The overall results can be found in the broad categories of data collected and analyzed throughout the grant interventions.

Incoming applications did increase during each Intervention. The program started with 114 total incoming applications for the three months during the first Intervention. During the final Intervention, there was a total of 130 incoming applications. These numbers represent a 14.0351% increase from the first intervention's onset to the last month of the final intervention demonstration period. This particular measurement indicates an increase in awareness of the program.

The unique Child Support website view counts for July 2019, in which the website was launched, was 2,827. The unique Child Support website views for the last month of Intervention Three was 3,861. These numbers represent a 36.5759% increase from the onset of the first Intervention to the final month of the Intervention Three demonstration period. This particular measurement indicates an increased awareness of the program.

The client contacts for the office overall during the three months of Intervention One were 9,290. The client contacts for the office overall during the three months of Intervention Three were a total of 9,533. This particular measurement indicates an increase in client engagement through the grant initiatives.

These specific results indicate that overall, the child support program benefited from the Digital Marketing interventions conducted. The research questions indeed guided the program in being

able to see how each Intervention made an impact upon the program through the specific data measurements. The program's success of the main goals to create awareness and increase engagement with clients can be supported by the data sets mentioned above. The Cherokee Nation office of Child Support initially set out to learn about digital marketing and incorporate tools for continued growth and through these interventions, have determined that all three interventions made an impact in the overall awareness of the program.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

The most important lesson is that any work towards educating and providing general information to the public will undoubtedly assist in streamlining the organization's overall message. Even if an organization believes they know what they want to say, they need to do this concisely and accurately as any print, video, and messaging paints a picture of the organization.

- Using digital media platforms to market a child support program requires the organization to request the client and general public perspective about child support from time to time. Outreach & effective communication never ends; programs should constantly update outreach materials and valuable information about the client's most relevant information.
- The program needs to be providing services that help the client now. Most child support clients need help right away. The question a child support program should be answering in any material- videos, ads – should always include what a child support program can do immediately to help them.
- Reaching out to clients is more straightforward with all the available social media platforms. The key is to determine what platform works best for the program and what is being utilized by the targeted population. The best platform this program used has been the website, as it provides a foundation upon which a program can continue to expand.
- The data this program retrieved through these interventions supports the idea that providing pertinent information and creating awareness of the child support program can yield positive results.

NEXT STEPS

Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support focuses on expanding what has been put in place by the Digital Marketing Grant. One of the underlying motives for applying for the grant was to develop a grant project plan that could continue to benefit the program even after the grant concluded. One of the permanent changes that have occurred since the onset of the grant has been the addition of a special project officer position to continue to build upon outreach and communication for the program. This position has become a full-time position within the main child support program to

develop continued services using technological platforms to serve the child support client better. Other changes include the continued measuring of the same data components measured throughout the grant. The grant's overall vision to reach and service more clients is undoubtedly a goal the program wants to continue to strive towards.

Since the website's launch, the program has continued to build upon what has been put in place. The program brought the payment portal directly to the website to make payments easier on the child support website. In addition, the program has opened up on the website the ability for clients to automatically request to be texted information about the program. The program has also developed a regular email blast system for all clients to get information out there as soon as possible. The program expanded the text messaging capability to all child support case managers to use this form of communication that hadn't been previously offered. The program will continue to track the usage of this particular communication tool. The program is working on adding easily fillable documents and can be submitted online via the website. The grant provided immense opportunity for the Cherokee Nation Office of Child Support Services to implement a strong foundation of social media and various technological platforms. This base will assist the program as it works towards continued growth and delivery of positive and helpful child support messages to the Cherokee communities.

COVID-19 IMPACT

The Digital Marketing program was affected by COVID-19 during what should have been the second and final year of the grant. However, due to the closing of office doors to the public in March 2020, there was an inability for the program staff who had been assigned to work on the Digital Media grant to go into the office to work on reports or be able to access the necessary information to complete specific work actions. The program was closed to the public for approximately 2.5 months. In June 2020, the office doors were open but only with specific safety precautions in place and only with roughly a third of the child support program staff. During this time, the Cherokee Nation Child Support program requested a no-cost extension of the grant to complete Intervention three. The program was required to implement a staggered work shift, which meant that from June 1, 2020- March 15, 2021, the child support staff who could come into the office only worked certain days of the week in the office. This ultimately required the child support staff who could go into the office to handle additional responsibilities. Many Cherokee Nation citizens were impacted financially by covid-19, which caused the child support staff to focus on providing referral information for those clients and providing referrals for services they may need for their children and families. The staggered work shifts stayed in place until March 15, 2021, when the CN Administration requested all staff report back to the office. The program has had to factor into the final Intervention, which has underlying issues to consider due to the COVID outbreak. Intervention One findings were completed before the COVID outbreak affecting Cherokee Nation reservation boundaries, so the program has no concern for any Intervention One results being impacted by the COVID outbreak. The Intervention Two demonstration was winding down when the Cherokee Nation Administration shut the offices down on March 23, 2020. The demonstration period for Intervention two ended March 30, 2020. The program did not see significant differences in the findings of how often the videos were viewed. However, incoming application counts and office contact numbers could have been impacted because some staff could not work during this period. The final Intervention the program completed, however, may have been affected by the COVID outbreak. The impact during Intervention Three is based on the fact that the Intervention was scheduled to begin on March 1, 2021, approximately two weeks before all program staff reported back to work full time in the office. The program determined it was best to discuss the COVID outbreak as a consideration when reviewing the findings of Intervention Three as it certainly is an underlying issue to consider that affected the overall timelines and ability to work without interruption on the final Intervention. The program strove to ensure that when reviewing compiled data during each intervention all outside variables were considered.