



Office Of Child Support Enforcement Digital Marketing Grant

Final Brief

GOAL:

To enhance digital presence and increase voluntary child support enrollments

INTERVENTIONS:

- Website Redesign and Search Engine Optimization
- Facebook Sponsored Advertising
- Online Application Launch with Remarketing and Search Advertising

COUNTIES ENGAGED:

Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver, Montrose

MARKETING CONSULTANT:

Spearca Communications

EVALUATION PARTNER:

Center for Policy Research

KEY FINDINGS

Straightforward, informative content on how child support can help parents provide for their children resonated and elicited responses across multiple digital marketing platforms and webpages.

DCSS' reimaged and redesigned website and search engine optimization efforts increased the frequency of DCSS and its website appearing in internet searches. The new website prompted more engagement and use from viewers and enhanced website navigation led to more visits to child support application webpages.

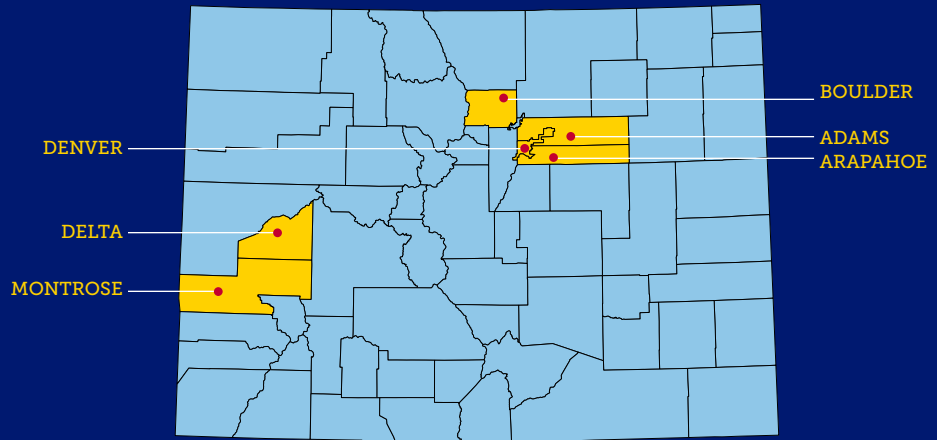
Facebook sponsored advertising reached a wide audience, elicited responses from the targeted population and engaged new users on the website, but it did not appear to prompt engagement beyond brief website visits. While useful for sharing information about services which may eventually lead to applying for child support services, Facebook advertising does not immediately produce new child support enrollments.

Online advertising directed towards individuals with an existing interest in applying for child support is effective at both soliciting responses and prompting application related activity on the website.

Paid search advertising performed substantially better than any other type of advertising and led to submission of child support applications.

DCSS' digital presence was hugely enhanced by the launch of a fully online child support application process. Many new child support applicants quickly took advantage of this option and submitted their applications online.

Representing a mix of urban and rural counties, DCSS selected six counties for participation in the digital marketing project, including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver and Montrose.



OVERVIEW

The Digital Marketing grant, 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 multi-year 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 state and tribal 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.

APPROACH

DCSS leveraged the digital marketing project to fundamentally change its digital presence.

The first intervention reimaged and redesigned its 20-year old website, infusing it with messaging that promoted DCSS as helping families provide for their children and improving the site's appearance, readability, functionality, and overall user experience. A comprehensive search engine optimization campaign accompanied the website redesign.

The second intervention tested social media advertising to drive potential clients to the new and improved website. Using Facebook-sponsored advertising, the intervention compared two creatives that offered straightforward messages on how child support services can help parents provide for their families.

A screenshot of a Facebook post from the Colorado Department of Human Services. The post includes a profile picture of the CDHS, a post text asking for help with child support, a photo of two smiling boys, a logo for Colorado Child Support Services, a link to childsupport.state.co.us, and an 'Apply Now' button. The post also shows engagement metrics: 7 likes, 2 comments, and 6 shares.

Colorado Department of Human Services
7 mins · 🌐

Do you need help getting child support? The Colorado Child Support Services Program can start an order and/or collect child support for a one-time application fee of \$20.

COLORADO
Child Support Services
Department of Human Services

childsupport.state.co.us
Find out your options. [Apply Now](#)

7 Likes 2 Comments 6 Shares

Like Comment Share


Both the first and second interventions identified a need for a fully web-based application process. A COVID-19 related delay in implementing the third intervention created the opportunity to develop and launch an online child support application. Remarketing and search advertisements in the third intervention were directed to individuals with an interest in applying for child support to share information and guide viewers to the online application. Paid search advertising stood out as most effective at prompting responses and engagement, including submission of applications.


Throughout the project, DCSS sought the advice of the CDHS Family Voice Council and incorporated the unique perspective of those with lived experience into the advertising messaging.


DCSS recreated its website, experimented with various digital advertising options, and launched its online application through this digital marketing project. Together, these activities demonstrate tremendous progress in well-positioning the agency for effective outreach and communication with Colorado residents.

Colorado Department of Human Services
7 mins · 🌐

Do you need help getting child support? By opening a case with the Colorado Child Support Services Program, you can access many services to support your family.

Locate a parent 

Collect child support 

Change an order 

childsupport.state.co.us
We can help you. [Learn More](#)

👍 7 2 Comments 6 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share



INTERVENTIONS

1

WEBSITE REDESIGN AND SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

August 5 - November 4, 2019

Targeted to potential and current DCSS clients

Increased application-related website sessions and users by **over 80%**

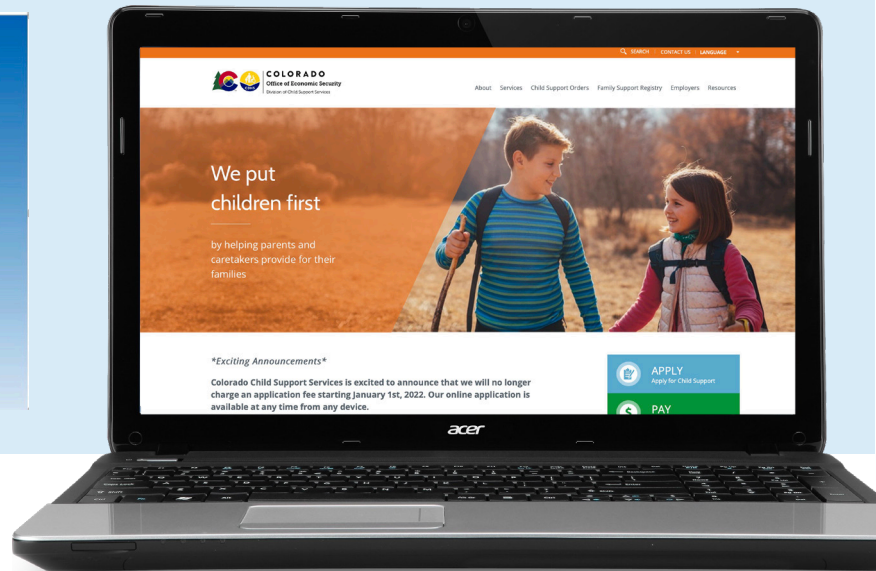
Prompted **75%** increase in application downloads

Increased organic search referrals by **41%**

BEFORE



AFTER



2

FACEBOOK SPONSORED ADVERTISING

January 6 - March 31, 2020

Targeted to single parent women aged 30-45 in 62 zip codes in six participating counties

Reach 87,650 individual Facebook feeds

Impressions 1,201,917

Tested two creatives

Clicks 1,884

Click Through Rate 0.15%

Cost per click \$2.44

facebook

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 platform is its ability to provide a sense of community for users.

3

REMARKETING AND SEARCH ADVERTISING TO PROMOTE ONLINE APPLICATION

July 20 - September 28, 2021

Targeted to single parent women aged 30-45 in six participating counties (paid search and search retargeting) and visitors to DCSS application-related webpages (remarketing)

Impressions 268,095

Tested three types of advertising: remarketing, search retargeting, and paid search campaign

Clicks 2,581

Click Through Rate Remarketing 0.22%

Click Through Rate Search Retargeting 0.12%

Click Through Rate Paid Search 16.42%

Cost per click \$2.34



Remarketing, search retargeting, and paid search directs display and search advertising to individuals with website and search activity related to the subject of the advertising. With viewers' internet activity serving as a proxy for expressed interest in the advertising subject, the advertisements leverage this interest to prompt responses and engagement from a highly targeted audience.



OUTCOMES

RESPONSES

The Facebook and remarketing and search retargeting advertisements elicited click through rates of .12% to .22%, which were lower than the cross-industry display advertising average of .35%, reported by Wordstream. By contrast, the paid search advertisements had a click through rate of 16.42%, which is considerably higher than the cross-industry average of 1.91% for search advertisements.

CREATIVES

The content, images, and graphics used on the website and in the advertisements relied on consistent themes of direct and simple messaging intended to communicate how child support services can help parents provide for their children. Across the websites and various advertisements, the creatives consistently produced responses from viewers. While the responses to different graphic elements and messages were tested against one another, there were no discernible differences in the effectiveness of the advertising content.

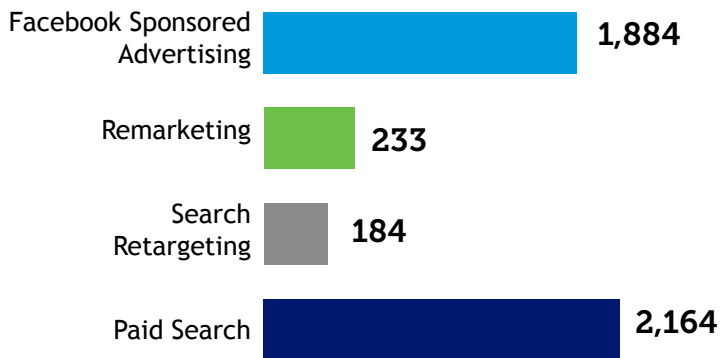
WEBSITE ACTIVITY

Application related activity on the DCSS website increased with each of the interventions. The redesign of the website prompted a 75% increase in application downloads, and the Facebook, remarketing, and search advertisements were the source for 42%-88% of application landing page sessions.

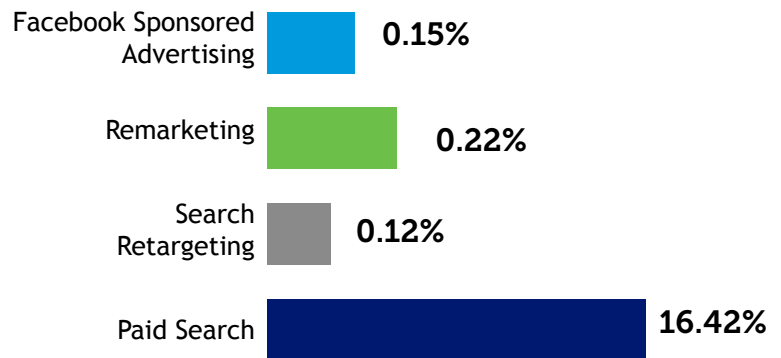
NEW CHILD SUPPORT ENROLLMENTS

The rate of new voluntary child support enrollments during each intervention was compared to comparable baseline periods. In the first intervention, enrollments increased 25%, but in the second and third interventions, new applications decreased, across the state but less so in the participating counties.

CLICKS/INTERACTIONS BY TYPE OF ADVERTISING



CLICK THROUGH RATE BY TYPE OF ADVERTISING



CHANGES IN NEW ENROLLMENTS

1st Intervention: Website Redesign	25%
2nd Intervention: Facebook Sponsored Advertising	-3%
3rd Intervention: Remarketing and Search Advertising	-16%

The rate of new child support applications fluctuates and is influenced by many factors. In the absence of an experimental study, the association between a digital marketing campaign and new enrollments cannot be determined.

LESSONS LEARNED

The type of creative content and messaging used on DCSS' website and in its digital marketing advertisements were hugely influenced by the lessons learned and shared by the California Department of Child Support Services from the findings of a comprehensive branding study conducted by Ogilvy.

Ogilvy's findings suggest parents' need for child support services may invoke negative feelings, as it is often associated with the end of a relationship, disruption to families, financial strain, and blame. While engaging with child support services may lead to improved family circumstances, enrolling in services may feel like a failure to parents. Coupled with frequently inaccurate and negative impressions of child support services, this calls for messaging that avoids amplifying the negative associations and instead positions child support services as a useful resource for parents. Specifically, this translates to messages that are:

- **Basic, straightforward, and informational about the resources available**
- **Focused on the service and value to parents, instead of the needs of children**
- **More resonant with the challenging circumstances that prompt engagement with child support than inspirational messages promoting parenting and family ideals**

DCSS' website and message creation incorporated Ogilvy's advice, but also sought the council of Colorado parents with lived experience of utilizing child support services. The CDHS Family Voice Council validated the perspective offered through the Ogilvy study and added insight on strategies for reaching parents through the digital marketing project. DCSS will be well-served by continuing to heed the advice from the Ogilvy study and from parents with lived experience of utilizing child support services when developing advertising and marketing campaigns.

The Facebook sponsored advertisements used during the second intervention were targeted to a broad population of single parent women in six counties and prompted brief responses from users new to the DCSS website. It is possible these advertisements contributed to viewers learning about the availability of services that may have eventually prompted enrollment. By contrast, the digital advertisements directed to individuals with online behavior indicating an interest in applying for child support services attracted a larger and more engaged response from viewers, including engagement with the online application. The purposes of both types of advertisements are important, but more immediate impact was realized through the advertisements directed to those already interested in child support services.



The complex administrative structure in which DCSS operates (part of the Economic Security Unit within the State of Colorado’s Department of Human Services) created some challenges to the overall implementation of the digital marketing project. By necessity, website updates and creation of the online application relied on other departments that might not have shared DCSS’ prioritization of the project. Recognizing and planning for this complexity of implementation across multiple departments would be helpful to future digital marketing and website updates.

Digital marketing is most effective when digital resources support and complement one another. DCSS laid a critical foundation in its first digital marketing intervention by redesigning its website and then added the missing link with the third intervention and the launch of the online application. With these bookends, digital advertising can fluidly drive users to responsive resources that facilitate the enrollment in child support.

PAID SEARCH ADVERTISEMENT

Ad · <https://childsupport.state.co.us>

Child Support Made Simpler | Apply Online Today | CO Division of Child Support

Many Cases Handled Without Expensive Fees. Collect Child Support. CO Division of Child Support

Ad · <https://childsupport.state.co.us>

Co Division of Child Support | Low-Cost Paternity Testing | Establish Paternity for Child

Legal and Confidential Process. We Can Help You Support Your Family. Don't Waste Money on Expensive Testing.

DCSS ONLINE APPLICATION

COLORADO
Office of Economic Security
Division of Child Support Services

Colorado Child Support Services Application

We Put Children First

The Colorado Division of Child Support Services (CSS) works with parents and caretakers to make sure all Colorado kids get the financial support they need to thrive.

We're making it easier for Colorado families to apply for, and receive, child support services. You can now complete an application for child support services online. Our online application will guide you through the process based on your family's situation.

Once you submit your application, you will not be able to make additional changes. The submission activates the county review period. During this time, your county child support office will be in touch with you to collect the \$20 application fee and gather the required legal documents needed to complete the application process.

We strongly encourage you to complete your application online. This is a streamlined process that will get your information to your county child support office faster. If you are unable to do this, a printable version in **English** or **Espanol** is available. Please complete and mail the printed application to your county child support office.

CSS Tip: Do not fill out this online application for child support services if you are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Your case may have already been referred to us. Contact the child support office in the county you are currently receiving TANF benefits to find out the status of your case.

*We are here to help you and your family. If you have questions, please contact your **local county child support office***

Get Started

Returning to Application?

PIN:

Last Name:

First Name:

Date of Birth:

Review

MORE INFORMATION

DCSS’ Digital Marketing project’s evaluation reports and technical assistance guidance briefs are available to provide more in-depth information. Visit centerforpolicyresearch.org to learn more.

