



# **Digital Marketing Grant**

## **Final Briefing Document**

*Prepared for the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)*

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## **Background**

### ***Grant Purpose***

The Digital Marketing grant program, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families is a 24-month demonstration project with the goal of researching how digital marketing may help the child support program more effectively reach and serve families. In September 2018, OCSE awarded funds to 14 child support agencies to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents that could benefit from child support services and create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents.

### ***Problem Description***

While the Texas child support caseload has not declined, the rate of growth has plateaued, which can be attributed to a multitude of factors. The Texas Office of the Attorney General's Child Support Division (CSD) applied for and utilized this demonstration grant to explore specific areas where communication and information sharing may directly contribute to increasing the number of child support applicants. CSD sought to understand how and if two-way digital communication, strategically placed graphics and videos, online application enhancement, and the introduction of an AI chatbot could negate the flattening trend of new child support application.

## **Interventions and Evidence Based Findings**

### ***Intervention I***

#### **Description**

Intervention I consisted of the deployment of a new two-way digital chat feature on five of the child support application and information webpages. This "road test" allowed CSD to ensure the new tool was properly staffed and that any technical issues or concerns could be resolved prior to the deployment of any digital marketing campaigns.

#### **Target Population**

While the new chat feature was placed on the external facing webpage, it was limited to five pages with information about the application process or the services that CSD can provide, including:

- Get Started with Child Support
- How Child Support Works
- How to Apply for Child Support
- Out of State Parents
- Child Support and Family Violence

Any customer visiting one of these pages would have seen and could have used the chat feature, but the strategic placement sought to limit that access to customers seeking child support services or seeking assistance with the child support application.

### Timeline

Chat launched on April 1, 2019 and ran for the entirety of the Digital Marketing grant, but the evaluation of this specific intervention was 90 days from launch.

### Research Questions

1. Was the availability of the chat feature associated with an increase in the number of completed online applications for services across the state?
2. Was the availability of the chat feature associated with a decrease in the percentage of abandoned online applications?
3. Was the availability of the chat feature associated in an increase the CSD’s ability to provide a higher level of customer service?
4. Was the availability of the chat feature associated in an increase customer satisfaction in how they communicate with the CSD?

### Outcome Measures

Outcome	Method	Data Points
Increased completed online applications for service across Texas	Compare the number of online applications completed in the three months prior to Intervention I to the number of online applications completed during Intervention I	Internal application data from CSD’s Business Management Information (BMI) section
	Compare monthly application trends from January through July 2018 to monthly trends from January through July 2019	
	Evaluate online application survey responses	Customer feedback
Increased satisfaction in customer service	Review the star ratings from the chat analytics report	1-5 Likert Scale
	Evaluate online application survey responses	Customer Feedback
	Examine chat analytics	
Increased customer satisfaction by how they communicate with the CSD	Evaluate online application survey responses	Customer feedback
	Examine chat analytics	
Decreased online application abandonment rate	Compare the rate of abandoned online applications for the three months prior to Intervention I to the rate of abandoned online applications during Intervention I	Internal application data from CSD’s Business Management Information (BMI) section

## Results

Digital communication through chat was well received by both external and internal customers. External customers were provided an opportunity to give feedback through a 5-point Likert survey and open comment box at the end of each chat. The feedback showed a high level of satisfaction, with 2,156 reviews and an average rating of 4.71 stars. The overall chat volume during Intervention I was also high for the new communication tool with CSD receiving 10,505 chat requests and handling 10,495, for an acceptance rate of 99.9%.

## Analysis

The new chat feature provided a means of digital communication which afforded convenience for the external customer and more functionality for the internal customer, including the ability to handle multiple chats at the same time and for the system to intuitively translate using Google Translate. While we foresaw the possible long-term benefit of this method of communication, we did not foresee how invaluable it would become until COVID-19. This pilot allowed us to test and familiarize ourselves with the technology for roughly one year prior to it becoming a primary source of customer communication.

The external customer feedback given during Intervention I through chat also provided direction to enhancing the online application experience, which was undertaken during and immediately following this intervention.

## Intervention II

### Description

Intervention II used specifically targeted digital marketing outreach to proactively increase the number of child support applications. The CSD created Spanish and English graphics and videos to be displayed in pre-selected designated marketing areas (DMAs) by AMS Pictures. Based on audience target data, the DMAs included the Harlingen-Weslaco-McAllen DMA (Cameron and Hidalgo counties) and the Lubbock DMA (Lubbock county). A list of 624 keywords of custom intents, which included various words and phrases that could be used when searching for child support services, were used to isolate individuals who may be seeking child support services.

### Target Population

The target population for this grant consisted of separated, divorced, or single Texas parents between 18 and 45 years of age, having at least one child under the age of 18 living with them. Intervention II focused on two DMAs ((Figure 1).

DMA	By Age		By Age Total	By Marital Status		By Marital Status Total
	Age 18-24	Age 25-54		Married	Never Married	
<b>Harlingen-Weslaco-Brownsville-McAllen, TX</b>	11,075	74,886	85,962	44,140	41,822	85,962
<b>Lubbock, TX</b>	4,620	21,139	25,759	12,155	13,604	25,759
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15,695</b>	<b>96,025</b>	<b>111,720</b>	<b>56,295</b>	<b>55,426</b>	<b>111,720</b>

Figure 1. Age and Marital Status within DMAs in Intervention II

## Timeline

Intervention II was designed to run for 30 days, beginning during the first full week of November 2019. Each launch ran during the following timeframes:

- Stationary banner display ran from November 4, 2019 – December 3, 2019.
- Social media display ran from November 5, 2019 – November 12, 2019.
- Video ran from November 6, 2019 – December 3, 2019.

## Research Questions

1. Is a display banner associated with the number of child support customers going to the “Apply Online” webpage?
2. Are social media displays associated with attracting possible child support customers to the “Apply Online” webpage?
3. Are videos associated with attracting possible child support customers to the “Apply Online” website?
4. Is the digital marketing campaign in Lubbock County associated with an increase the number of applications for services in that county?
5. Is the digital marketing campaign in Hidalgo and Cameron County associated with an increase the number of applications for service in those counties?
6. Is the implementation of the digital marketing campaign associated with a greater impact on one portion of the population than another?

## Outcome Measures

Outcome	Method	Data Points
Increased completed online applications for service within presentation areas (Cameron/Hidalgo, and Lubbock County)	Compare the historical trends for the number of applications received from 2018 through 2019 broken down by day.	Internal application data from CSD’s Business Management Information (BMI) section
Number of customers clicking on the displays and being directed to the CSD website	Review the ratio of impressions and number of clicks within each DMA	External digital marketing campaign data provided by AMS Pictures
Number of customers utilizing the display to get to “Apply Online” based on English and Spanish languages	Analyze the number of impression clicks based on display method and display language	External digital marketing campaign data provided by AMS Pictures

## Results

During Intervention II, there were 2,629,005 impressions and 4,373 clicks at a cost of \$22,223.36. The results showed an above industry standard click through rate (CTR) for the video (0.39%) and abbreviated social media campaign (0.30%). The banner displays, which accounted for the majority of the impressions, were below the industry standard CTR at 0.08%.

The biggest contrast came between the English and Spanish impressions, with the Spanish impressions having a higher CTR in almost every display method and across both DMAs.

Looking at the application data for the two DMAs provided less conclusive results. There was a slight increase or stabilization in the number of online applications during the intervention period.

### **Analysis**

While Intervention II showed promising results for the CTR on the social media displays and the video, and close to industry standard for the banner displays, a positive correlation between the displays and the number of applications could not be established. This intervention did highlight a possible English/Spanish gap, with the Spanish-speaking displays receiving higher CTRs on almost every display method and in both DMAs.

### ***Intervention III***

#### **Description**

Intervention III expanded on the previous intervention by combining the apply online message and the availability of chat, while also introducing the AI chat bot. The targeted digital outreach consisted of strategically placed English and Spanish graphics and videos on webpages within the designated DMAs: Harlingen-Weslaco-McAllen (Hidalgo and Cameron counties), Austin (Travis County), and Lubbock (Lubbock County). AMS Pictures assisted with the presentation of the graphics and videos using the 624 keywords of customer intents and data collection pertaining to CTR, video completion percentage, and device usage.

#### **Target Population**

The target population consisted of the same demographic parameters of the prior interventions, but the geographic area was expanded to include Travis County. This was done to expand and explore the data received in Intervention II concerning the high CTR rate on the Spanish language displays (Figure 2).

<b>County</b>	<b>County Population</b>	<b>Spanish-Language Speaker %</b>	<b>SFY18 TX CSD Online Applications</b>	<b>SFY18 TX CSD Paper Applications</b>
<b>Cameron</b>	423,908	72.2%	733	1,331
<b>Hidalgo</b>	865,939	83.2%	1,664	2,049
<b>Lubbock</b>	307,412	18.8%	782	611
<b>Travis</b>	1,248,743	23.6%	2,263	876

*Figure 2. Population Size, Spanish Speaking Percentage, and State Fiscal Year 2018 Application Numbers for Target Counties in Intervention III*

#### **Timeline**

Intervention III consisted of three graphic deployments, which were designed to run for 30 days.

- Stationary banner display ran from April 20, 2020 through May 20, 2020.
- Video ran from April 20, 2020 through May 20, 2020.



- Social media presentation was not displayed on the social media platforms because of social media restrictions.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between the digital marketing display banner and the number of potential child support customers going to the “Apply Online” webpage?
2. What is the relationship between the digital marketing videos and potential child support customers going to the “Apply Online” webpage?
3. What is the difference in the number of applications in DMAs during Intervention III, when compared to pre-intervention data?
4. What is the difference in the number of customers using the chat feature during Intervention III, when compared to pre-intervention data?
5. What is the relationship between customers viewing the digital marketing campaign impression and clicking on impression?
6. What is the relationship between the chat bot and customer satisfaction?

**Outcome Measures**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Data Points</b>
Increased completed online applications for service within designated marketing areas (Cameron/Hidalgo, Lubbock, and Travis County)	Compare the historical trends for the number of applications received prior to Intervention III to during Intervention III.	Internal application data from CSD’s Business Management Information (BMI) section
0.1% of customers clicking on the displays and being directed to the CSD website	Review the ratio of impressions and number of clicks within each DMA	External digital marketing campaign data provided by AMS Pictures
Number of customers utilizing the display to get to “Apply Online” based on English and Spanish languages	Analyzes the number of impression clicks based on display method and display language	External digital marketing campaign data provided by AMS Pictures
Number of customers having issues resolved through the use of the AI Chat Bot	Review the number of resolved and unresolved responses from the AI Chat Bot	Internal data sets provided by Comm100

**Results**

During Intervention III, there were 17,301,183 impressions and 12,239 clicks at a cost of \$37,691.03. The video impressions were above the industry standard at 0.17%, but the banner impression was not only below the industry standard, but also decreased from the prior intervention to 0.06%. After the social media campaign was pulled down during Intervention II, CSD was unable to receive permission from those platforms to post the new content, therefore there is no data associated with that method. The data provided in this intervention also went further in-depth and highlighted a higher tendency for customer to view the video and banner on tablets. Intervention III also continued the higher CTR on Spanish displays in every display

category and DMA, except for the video display in Lubbock where the English video accounted for 0.16% of the CTR, compared to 0.14% for the Spanish video.

The application data during this intervention did show a more pronounced upward trend when compared to the historical numbers of both paper and online applications. While a positive correlation can be seen within the data, causation could not be established.

### **Analysis**

Intervention III reinforced the finding of Intervention II concerning the need for providing information through technological outreach. The continuation of the higher CTR of the Spanish displays, even with the inclusion of an additional metropolitan DMA, highlighted a need or desire for more information. But, unlike Intervention II, the application data during Intervention III showed a more established upward trend. But, while a correlation can be established between Intervention III and the number of applications, causation cannot be.

During Intervention III, CSD also piloted an external customer facing AI chat bot for the first time in agency history. While the implementation went smoothly, the AI chat bot struggled because it only handled application or general questions. This limited scope led to some frustration among the external customer, but it did provide the framework and ongoing conversations about how bot technology can be used in the future and laid the groundwork for the deployment of an email bot, which has been deployed.

### ***Intervention IV***

#### **Description**

Intervention IV was the culmination of “apply online”, chat, and Child Support Awareness month displayed through a public service announcement (PSA). The digital marketing campaign was displayed in all three DMAs (Harlingen-Weslaco-McAllen, Austin, and Lubbock) and posted on the Texas Attorney General’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. CSD contracted with AMS Pictures and The Davis Group to assist with isolating the target audiences within the DMAs, developing the visuals, presenting the content, and reporting findings.

#### **Target Population**

The target population for Intervention IV consisted of the same population as Intervention III, except for the social media campaign. The inability to get permission from the social media platforms on the original request and appeal, lead to the PSA being placed on the Texas Attorney General’s social media platforms without any geographic restrictions (Figure 3).

County	County Population	Spanish-Language Speaker %	SFY18 TX CSD Online Applications	SFY18 TX CSD Paper Applications
<b>Cameron</b>	423,908	72.2%	733	1,331
<b>Hidalgo</b>	865,939	83.2%	1,664	2,049
<b>Lubbock</b>	307,412	18.8%	782	611
<b>Travis</b>	1,248,743	23.6%	2,263	876

*Figure 3. Population Size, Spanish Speaking Percentage, and State Fiscal Year 2018 Application Numbers for Target Counties in Intervention IV*

### **Timeline**

Intervention IV was a PSA presented during the month of August 2020 to coincide with Child Support Awareness month.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the difference in the number of applications in DMAs during Intervention IV, when compared to historical data?
2. What is the difference in the number of customers using the chat feature during Intervention IV compared to pre-Intervention IV data?
3. What is the relationship between customers viewing the digital marketing campaign and clicking on impression?
4. What is the relationship between customers viewing the digital marketing campaign and chat traffic?

### **Outcome Measures**

Outcome	Method	Data Points
Increased completed online applications for service within designated marketing areas (Cameron/Hidalgo, Lubbock, and Travis County)	Compare the application trends for the number of applications received prior to Intervention IV to during Intervention IV.	Internal application data from CSD’s Business Management Information (BMI) section
0.1% of customers clicking on the displays and being directed to the CSD website	Review the ratio of impressions and number of clicks within each DMA	External digital marketing campaign data provided by AMS Pictures
Number of customers utilizing the display to get to “Apply Online” based on English and Spanish languages	Analyze the number of impression clicks based on display method and display language	External digital marketing campaign data provided by AMS Pictures

## **Results**

During Intervention IV, there were 1,992,230 impressions and 3,478 clicks at a cost of \$21,207.09. The video impressions or PSA were above the industry standard in all three DMAs with an average of 0.17%. A total of 1,975,939 videos were started by the customers and 1,001,411 or 51% watched the entirety of the video. Similar to Intervention III, the Spanish CTR was higher than the English CTR in the Austin DMA and Harlingen-Weslaco-McAllen DMA, but lower in the Lubbock DMA.

Intervention IV reinforced the prior interventions in showing a correlation between the digital marketing outreach and number of applications, but no causation.

## **Analysis**

Throughout Intervention II, III, and IV the data continued to show a more likelihood for the Spanish displays to have a higher CTR. While this may not show a specific lack of engagement being provided to this population, it does highlight a possible desire for more information.

## **Impact of COVID**

The impact of COVID-19 on CSD and the digital marketing grant was profound and insightful. In March 2020, CSD transitioned to a completely remote work model for all sections. While there may have been an immediate shock for both internal and external customers caused by this transition, CSD made customer service and communication a top priority by leveraging technology, the knowledge obtained from other agencies, and internal projects. The CSD Call Centers and Written Inquiry section were able to transition to remote fairly seamlessly, external facing communication was created or enhanced so customers understood how this may impact their child support case, and the chat feature piloted in the digital marketing grant was deployed statewide for full case customers.

The effect of COVID-19 on the digital marketing grant were two-fold, because while it negatively impacted the number of digital customer interactions with the live chat feature placed on the five application web pages and the data associated with that feature, the agency was able to test the live chat feature for eleven months prior to CSD transitioning to remote. This experimental ramp-up time allowed CSD to become familiar with the software and understand how to effectively utilize the tool to communicate with our customer base. Without this grant, CSD would not have been able to transition to this additional customer service tool quickly, thereby placing more pressure on the call centers and Written Inquiry staff. Since chat was deployed to assist all child support customers, there have been 1,583,584 chats handled between April 1, 2020 and September 30, 2021, with an acceptance rate of 92.04%.

While the traffic for the live chat feature as part of the grant was negatively impacted, the digital marketing campaigns and the deployment of the AI bot were not directly impacted. The digital marketing interventions that occurred after the remote work model was enacted supported the results from the digital marketing interventions deployed prior to COVID-19.

## **Conclusions and Key Lessons Learned**

The lessons learned during this grant have been eye opening, critical, and pushed CSD forward with the most glaring impact being the implementation of chat. Intervention I and the implementation of the soft launch of chat laid the framework for the deployment of chat on a full case level in response to the safety measure for COVID-19. This implementation has continued to grow and has become an operational program that will continue being supported by OAG-CSD through the creation of a new division focused on the customer experience.

The grant also showed that CSD should continue to reach out to our external customers for feedback to improve processes and functions, while exploring the informational needs of the English as a second language population. The high CTR for the Spanish displays during Interventions II, III, and IV, when compared to the English displays, highlighted a desire or possible need for more communication from the OAG-CSD. To fulfill this need, the OAG-CSD is actively pursuing opportunities for outreach and involvement of the community in the child support process.

The findings of this grant also highlighted a need for the OAG-CSD to continue engaging external customers through the evolution and implementation of programs, initiatives, and changes to ensure the desired outcome is being achieved. During Intervention I, external customer feedback was regularly sought in an effort to continuously improve the online application questions. This data was used to enhance the customer experience to not only increase applications, but also provide clarity and understanding.

Overall, the digital marketing outreach showed that while causation could not be achieved between the outreach and online application numbers, a correlation could be inferred. During the time of the digital marketing displays, a downward trend in the number of applications would stabilize or reverse. This change would continue through the intervention and for a brief period afterward, until reverting to the initial trajectory. So, while brief, the digital marketing interventions appear to have had a positive influence and highlighted the possible need for more frequent outreach to establish a sustained adjustment.

## **New Steps**

The numeric and operational data collected from this grant has been instrumental in shaping how we communicate and interact with customers seeking child support information and services. Using this information, CSD has operationalized the live two-way digital chat feature and is seeking to expand its role within the organization through the use of artificial intelligence. An additional feature tested during the grant was offline messaging during non-business hours. If a customer clicked on the chat button during non-business hours, they were given the option of sending an email message to a specific CSD Outlook mailbox. These messages were reviewed and responded to the next business day by the chat staff. The AI bot feature would provide interactive dialogue, information, and guidance during non-business hours. Some of the shortcomings of this feature that were exposed during the grant are attempting to be remedied within the CSD technology division, such as the ability to provide more case specific information. There are still many hurdles to overcome, including security compliance and technical feasibility, but this grant has opened the door for this conversation to begin.