

Colorado Child Support Services



Digital Marketing Project Intervention 3:

Website Remarketing, Paid Search and Search Retargeting Advertising



Evaluation Report
Anne Byrne, MS
December 2021

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Cover Page

Intervention III Evaluation Report: Website Remarketing, Paid Search, and Search Engine Retargeting Advertising

Grantee Agency: Colorado Division of Child Support Services

Date Submitted: December 2021

Title of Intervention: Remarketing, Search Retargeting, and Paid Search 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 implemented three time-bound marketing interventions including a redesign of the CSS website, Facebook sponsored advertising, and internet advertising through website remarketing, search retargeting and paid search advertising targeted to individuals whose online activities suggest an interest in applying for child support. The intervention was implemented July 20, 2021 – September 28, 2021, after a long delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. While the delay required a change in plans, it also enabled CSS to launch a fully online child support application process. The advertisements in the third intervention shared information about child support services and the availability of the online application process.

The objectives for the intervention were to:

1. Increase the number of people in the target audiences that visit designated landing pages (first page visited) on the CSS website.
2. Increase the number of child support applications submitted by 2% over a baseline of a comparable period in a previous year.
3. Increase the number of applications initiated and submitted online.
4. Determine the effectiveness of remarketing, paid search and search engine retargeting advertisements in driving visitors to the online application and related CSS webpages.

CSS was successful in meeting most of the objectives of this intervention.

- The advertisements prompted 2,979 sessions on two application-related webpages, accounting for 42% of all landing page sessions on these pages.
- New child support applications across the state decreased during the intervention period relative to a baseline period in 2019. The intervention counties experienced a smaller rate of decrease in applications than the state as a whole. While changes in application rates cannot be associated with the intervention in the absence of an experimental research project, there is direct evidence from internet metrics that the advertisements referred at least 39 individuals who completed an online application. It cannot be determined with the data available the degree to which an advertisement influenced the decision to apply for child support, but the data does provide evidence an advertisement played a role in how individuals accessed the online application.

- The number of web-based applications during the intervention period increased 148% over the baseline period. During the baseline period, applicants could begin their application online, but were required to print and submit a paper application. The new online application streamlined this process and allows enrollees to submit the application entirely online. In addition to the option to complete applications online, the increase in web-based applications was likely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic which prompted more online interactions across industries and sectors.
- Paid search advertising was particularly effective at driving viewers to the website. With a click through rate of 16.42%, the paid search advertisements performed far better than Wordstream’s benchmark average 1.91% click through rate for search advertisements. Workstream is an online marketing service that has established benchmark averages for various advertising platforms. The remarketing and search retargeting advertisements had click through rates of .20% and .12%, both performing at less than the Wordstream benchmark average of .35% for display advertisements.

The re-imagining and overhaul of the CSS website in the first intervention laid the foundation for the next two interventions. The second and third interventions tested the value of online advertising through Facebook, remarketing, search retargeting and paid search platforms. All of the advertisements drove users to the website, but for most visitors, the interaction on the website was brief. The exception was visitors who responded to paid search advertising, which was effective at driving viewers to the website and led to greater interaction on the site, including the submission of online applications.

During the course of the digital marketing project, CSS developed and deployed a fully online child support application process, which was viewed as an essential component to making the child support application process easier for new clients. During this third intervention, the proportion of applications submitted online grew from 23% to 71% of all the applications submitted.

This intervention completes CSS’ digital marketing project. This project has fundamentally improved CSS’ digital footprint and well positions the agency for effective digital engagement with the public and clients, now and in the future.

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 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 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.

Colorado Division of Child Support Services (CSS) was awarded a grant to implement three interventions to test various digital marketing strategies. The first intervention focused on reimagining and recreating CSS' website and the second intervention tested Facebook sponsored advertising. This third intervention tested three types of advertising intended to drive individuals interested in child support to Colorado's new online application.

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 that addressed declining enrollments in several ways. The plan included an action item related to expanding and enhancing the brand 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 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.

Table 1. CSS Digital Marketing Team

Role	Responsibilities
Project Sponsors <i>Keri Batchelder and Sabrina Montoya</i>	Participate in all planning meetings related to the digital marketing project. Provide review and final approval of communications and evaluation plans. Provide review and final approval of intervention creative.
Project Managers <i>Heather Rego and Sabrina Montoya</i>	Manage all consultants participating in the project. Collaborate with CSS and CDHS staff to review communications and evaluation plans. Collect feedback on proposed creative. Work with CSS to obtain relevant data related to interventions and share with consultants.
Advisory Committee <i>Representatives of County and State Child Support Offices</i>	Review and establish plans for digital marketing interventions. Implement county-based activities related to the project including inquiry logs and links to CSS’ website.
Consultants <i>Spearca and Center for Policy Research</i>	Conduct research related to digital marketing mediums and target audience usage. Determine baseline and intervention data needed to evaluate intervention performance. Develop communications and evaluation plans for intervention. Provide copywriting, and graphic design services and execute the intervention. Manage all communications initiatives related to the intervention. Develop strategy for intervention implementation. Provide regular monitoring services of intervention performance.

Intervention

Goals

The overall goal of the digital marketing project was to increase child support applications.

Specific objectives of the third intervention were to:

1. Increase the number of people in the target audiences that visit designated landing pages on the CSS website.
2. Increase the number of child support applications submitted by 2% over a baseline of a comparable period in the previous year.
3. Increase the number of applications initiated and submitted online.
4. Compare the effectiveness of remarketing, paid search, and search engine retargeting advertisements in driving visitors to the online application and related CSS webpages.

Development

CSS originally planned to launch its third intervention in June of 2020. These plans were adjusted due to the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the past year, Colorado county child support offices have dealt with numerous changes to their normal operations, including closed

offices and adjustments to hours of operation, which have impacted their interactions with applicants and customers.

Instead of launching the intervention in June 2020, CSS decided to push back any paid media until the second quarter of 2021. This postponement created an opportunity for CSS to create and launch an online child support application. The previous application posted on the CSS website was a hybrid online/printed application. Applicants could begin the process of applying for child support services online, but they had to print, sign, and mail the application to a county child support office, which limited the online resource's usefulness.

Over an eight-month period, CSS formed a sub-group to develop the fully online application in partnership with Spearca and Office of Information Technology (OIT). Spearca reimagined the current application for child support services from a user experience perspective – streamlining the application, eliminating jargon, and adding tip boxes to provide clarification where needed. OIT managed the development of the online application, and the fully online application launched on June 15, 2021. Original plans for the third intervention were amended to promote the availability of the online application. CSS' third intervention used website remarketing, paid search and search engine retargeting advertising as its digital marketing mediums.

Description

The third intervention sought to reach individuals interested in applying for child support services. Previous online activity was leveraged to identify and drive viewers to the new online application process, using remarketing and retargeting display advertisements and paid search advertisements. The intervention started on July 20, 2021 and ran through September 28, 2021.

Website Remarketing

Individuals who visited two application-related webpages on the CSS website (*Apply-services* and *eAppforservices*) were remarketed with display advertisements that appeared on a variety of online media platforms. When individuals visited one of the two designated pages, a "cookie" was placed on their browser, which prompted the advertisements to display over a 30-day period following their website visit. When viewers clicked on an advertisement to learn more, they were directed back to the CSS webpage they had visited previously. The remarketing advertisements were directed to all visitors to the designated webpages.

The content of the advertisements let viewers know that applying for child support is easier now than before with the online application. The advertisements featured two different images, one with a

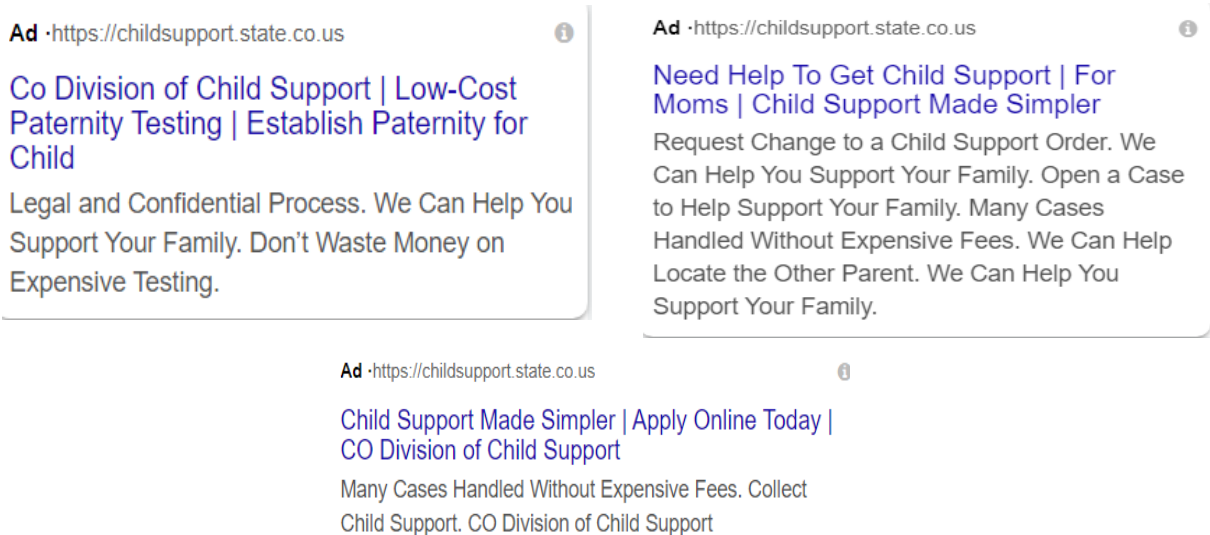
mother and child, and the other with two children, each with three message frames. The advertisements appeared in a variety of sizes and shapes, to meet space specifications of various devices. Examples of the advertisements are shown below:



Paid Search Advertising

Paid search advertising allowed CSS to reach individuals who were actively searching online for child support-related information. Through paid search advertising, buyers bid for advertisement placement in a search engine's sponsored results when someone searches for a keyword related to the services

provided. Spearca Communications compiled an extensive list of keywords based on research on past child support search activity to prioritize advertisement placement in search results when key words were used. The advertisements appeared along with other search results on a viewer’s screen. The paid search advertisements were targeted to the individuals in the six intervention counties who conducted an internet search using identified keywords. Different ad groups, in a text format, appeared based on the search terms. Samples of the paid search advertisements are displayed below:



Search Engine Retargeting

Search engine retargeting tracks what types of keywords people type into search engines and then directs related display advertising to these individuals. This type of advertising allows advertisers to reach consumers who are directly searching for their products or services and may or may not visit their website. Spearca Communications’ list of child support application keywords triggered the retargeting advertisements. These advertisements displayed on a variety of platforms to the identified audience as they surfed the internet over a 30-day period. These advertisements were directed to viewers in the six intervention counties and posed the question: “Has your life changed?” and shared information on the range of child support services available. Advertisements were displayed in a variety of sizes to meet space specifications of various devices, and featured two different images, one with a mother and children and the other with a father and child. These advertisements directed viewers to both of the *Apply-services* and *eAppforservices* webpages and included four screens. Examples of the advertisements are displayed below:



The search retargeting campaign also included a version of the advertisement with the same content but without an image.

Target Population

The target population for this third intervention was individuals from the six intervention counties who had demonstrated an interest in applying for child support services. Demonstrated interest was determined by online activity, including visits to CSS' two application related webpages and internet searches using key child support search terms. As required by the parameters of remarketing advertising, advertisements were delivered to anyone who visited the designated pages. The search retargeting and paid search advertisements were directed to women aged 30-45 in the six intervention counties, which include: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Delta, Denver, and Montrose counties. The targeted populations and a summary description of each type of advertisement is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Description of Advertisements and Targeted Audiences

Advertisement Type	Targeted Audience	Description
Website Remarketing	CSS <i>Apply-services</i> and <i>EAppforservices</i> Webpage Visitors	Multi-frame display advertisements promoting the ease of applying through the online application.
Geo-targeted Paid Search Advertising	Women aged 30- 45 from the six intervention counties who typed in specific search terms related to child support.	Text-based, sponsored search result that appeared when specific terms were entered into a Google search. Different versions of the ad text appeared based on the search terms used.
Geo-targeted Search Engine Retargeting	Women aged 30- 45 from the six intervention counties whose search term activity includes identifies key search terms.	Multi-frame display advertisements promoting the range of child support services and the online application process. These ads were targeted to users who had previously searched child support-related terms.

Timeline

As previously noted, implementation of the third intervention was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The delay period was utilized to develop and launch the new online application process. The intervention was postponed until July 20, 2021 and ran through September 28, 2021.

Outcome Measures

The objectives of CSS’ third digital marketing intervention were to:

1. Increase the number of people in the target audiences that visit designated landing pages on the CSS website.
2. Increase the number of child support applications submitted by 2% over a baseline of a comparable period in the previous year.
3. Increase the number of applications initiated and submitted online.
4. Compare the effectiveness of remarketing, paid search, and search engine retargeting advertisements in driving visitors to the online application and related CSS webpages.

Data elements used to measure outcomes included metrics provided by the advertisement reseller, Local Page Pop, website activity through Google Analytics, CSS administrative data, and feedback from CSS enrollees who submitted their applications through the new online application process and responded to an invitation to participate in a survey.

Local Page Pop, the advertising reseller used for this project, provided data on the advertisements impressions, clicks and click through rate (CTR). CTR is the generally accepted metric useful for comparing advertisement performance across audiences and platforms and is determined by dividing

the number of advertisement impressions by the number of clicks.

Google Analytics supplied the data on website reach, responses to advertisements, and behavior of website users. Spearca Communications tagged each type of advertisement as a campaign within Google Analytics, which facilitated tracking of website use that originated with an advertisement.

Specific metrics include:

- Campaign – A tracking process within Google Analytics that tags activity related to specific advertisements.
- Users – The number of new and returning people who visit a site during a set period
- Pageview – An instance of a page being loaded (or reloaded) in a browser, defined as the total number of pages viewed
- Sessions – The period a user is active on a webpage
- 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.

CSS administrative data on new non-TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) applications from the state as a whole and the intervention counties were also explored to measure outcomes. Enrollment in TANF requires also enrolling in child support services, and the focus of the digital marketing project was on enrolling new, non-TANF clients who come to child support services voluntarily. Administrative data included information on individuals who initiated a child support application across the state and in the six participating counties for the baseline period of July – September 2019, and the intervention period of July – September 2021. The year 2019 was selected as the comparison period instead of 2020, due to the pandemic in 2020 and its likely impact on the number of new child support applications. While the pandemic persists in 2021, county child support offices are open to the public and other operations have adjusted to a different way of conducting business. 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, as these are not voluntary enrollments in child support services.

Research Questions

- 1) How are remarketing, search retargeting, and paid search advertisements associated with activity on the *CSS Apply-services* and *eAppforservices* webpages?
- 2) Are remarketing, search retargeting, and paid search advertisements associated with changes to the number of new child support applications from non-assistant enrollees?

- 3) How are new applications submitted online associated with overall application activity?
- 4) What are the experiences of new enrollees who submitted their applications through the new online application?

Results

Sample Size

While the number of individuals who were exposed to the advertisements through the third intervention is unknown, we were able to track the number of times advertisements were displayed and the number of individuals who clicked on the ads to access the CSS website. This information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Advertising Exposure, Engagement and Website Use

Metric	Frequency
Impressions (Ad displays)	268,095
Clicks	2,584
Google Analytics Identified Users	2,827

The metrics across platforms (Local Page Pop and Google Analytics) do not align with one another, as different mechanisms are used and each platform has different limitations. 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 Local Page Pop. 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. Even with these constraints, Google Analytics is a useful tool for gathering information on activity trends of websites and individual pages within a website.

Intervention Results

Advertisement Metrics

The three different types of advertisements were displayed a total of 268,092 times (impressions) during the intervention period. Search retargeting had the highest number of impressions at over 150,000, followed by remarketing at over 104,000. The paid search had relatively small number of impressions at just over 13,000, due to the specificity of the targeting based on key words, location, and the costs associated with keyword bidding. Overall, the three types of advertisements elicited 2,581 clicks, as registered in the Local Page Pop platform. The click through ratio (CTR) for the three mediums varied from a low of .12% for the search retargeting to the much higher 16.42% CTR achieved by the

paid search approach. The summary advertising metrics are illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Third Intervention Campaign Advertising Metrics

Advertisement Type	Impressions	CTR	Clicks
Remarketing	104,643	0.22%	233
Search Retargeting	150,266	0.12%	184
Paid search	13,183	16.42%*	2,164
Overall Intervention	268,092	0.96%	2,581

*Significant at <.01

Overall, the advertisements for the third intervention had an average CTR of 0.96%. According to Wordstream, an organization that compiles benchmark averages for digital advertising, the average CTR for paid search is 1.91% and 0.35% for display advertisements.¹ CSS' CTR for its paid search advertisements was more than eight times higher than the average CTR for this type of advertisement, suggesting CSS' paid search advertisements were especially effective in eliciting a response from viewers. The other two types of advertising had CTR rates below Wordstream's average.

The remarketing advertisements displayed for individuals who had visited the *Apply-services* and *eAppforservices* pages of the website and directed viewers back to the same pages. The *Apply-services* page provides a narrative description of the application process, while the *eAppforservices* page starts the online application process. The CTR for advertisements directed to the two webpages differed significantly from one another, with the advertisement targeted to the *Apply-services* page performing at 0.29%, while the advertisement targeted to the *eAppforservices* page generated a CTR of only 0.04%. See Table 5.

Table 5. Remarketing Advertisements by Targeted Webpage

Webpage	Impressions	CTR	Clicks
Remarketing – Apply-services Page	78,054	0.29%	223
Remarketing – eAppforservices (Online application)	26,589	0.04%*	10

*Significant at <.01

The remarketing advertisements' central message was that applying for child support is easier with the online application. Viewers who had been to the *eAppforservices* page would have been exposed to the online application already, so perhaps promoting the online application to this group was not as compelling as it was to the other group.

The remarketing and search retargeting advertisements displayed in banners of different sizes. The

¹ <https://www.wordstream.com/click-through-rate>

largest display advertisements (900x600) had a CTR significantly higher than the other size advertisements. The performance of the different advertisements is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Advertisement Metrics by Advertisement Size

Advertisement Size	Impressions	CTR	Clicks
Large Display	11,103	0.68%*	56
Medium Display	113,175	0.12%	152
Small Display	99,092	0.18%	168
Small Display without Image	31,539	0.13%	41

*Significant at <.05

The images used in the advertisements included mother and child(ren), a father and child, and two children without an adult. One search retargeting advertisement contained text only, with no image. Within each type of advertisement, the CTR for different images was similar, suggesting the type of image did not make a difference on whether a viewer clicked on an advertisement. The advertisement without an image had a CTR lower than other search retargeting advertisements, but the difference was not significant. See Table 7.

Table 7. Advertisement CTR by Type of Image

Image	Remarketing	Search Retargeting
Mother and Child(ren)	0.30%	0.19%
Children	0.29%	NA
Father and Child	NA	0.20%
No Image	NA	0.13%

Website Activity Indicators

The set-up of the advertising campaigns included installing a tracking mechanism to enable Google Analytics to record activity by each type of advertisement and by the referred landing page. For each advertisement landing page, Google Analytics provides information on the number of webpage sessions, users, bounce rate, pages per session, and average duration of each session. Similar to the metrics provided through Local Page Pop, the paid search advertisements generated far more activity on the website than did the other types of advertisements. The paid search advertisements performed substantially better than other advertisements by every metric, with the most sessions and users, the lowest bounce rate, more pages per session, and longer average session duration. The Google Analytic metrics for all the advertisements are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Intervention Advertisements Google Analytic Metrics

Advertisement Type	Landing Page (s)	Sessions	Users	Bounce Rate	Pages per Session	Average Duration
Website Remarketing	eAppforservices	593	559	89.93%	1.17	0:11
	Apply-services	280	272	97.14%	1.06	0:01
Geo-targeted paid search Advertising	eAppforservices	2,033	1,479	71.67%	2.63	2:34
Geo-targeted Search Engine Retargeting	eAppforservices	384	373	94.79%	1.12	0:11
	Apply-services	145	144	95.17%	1.05	0:05

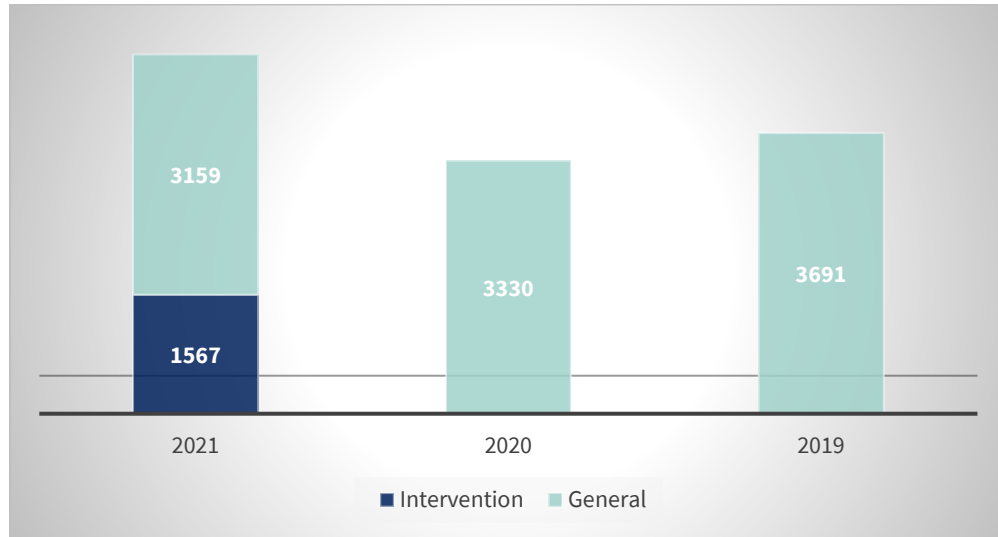
The intervention drove users to the CSS website, contributing to 42% of the total landing page sessions on the designated webpages (Table 9).

Table 9. Intervention Contribution to Landing Page Sessions

Landing Page	Total Sessions	Intervention Sessions	% Intervention Initiated Sessions
eAppforservices Page	6,195	2,365	58.81%
Apply-services Page	1,044	614	28.44%
Total both pages	7,239	2,979	42.15%

CSS' updated website launched in August 2019 as the first intervention in this digital marketing project. A comparison of landing page sessions for the *eAppforservices* page during August and September in 2019, 2020, and 2021 illustrates the growth in sessions and the influence of the third intervention on sessions in 2021 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. eAppforServices Landing Page Sessions in 2019, 2020, and 2021



The online application includes several sequential webpages, with users moving to the next only after completing a page. When an online application is submitted, the website transitions to a submission confirmation page. Only individuals who submit an online child support application can access this page. The presence of 39 intervention-initiated users on the ProcessSubmit page is evidence the advertisements played a role in application submission, at least for these 39 users who came to the online application process by clicking on one of the intervention advertisements (Table 10).

Table 10. Intervention-Initiated Users at Start and Completion of Online Application

eAppforservices Intervention Initiated Users		ProcessSubmit Intervention Initiated Users	
Frequency		Frequency	% of Total
1,979		39	2%

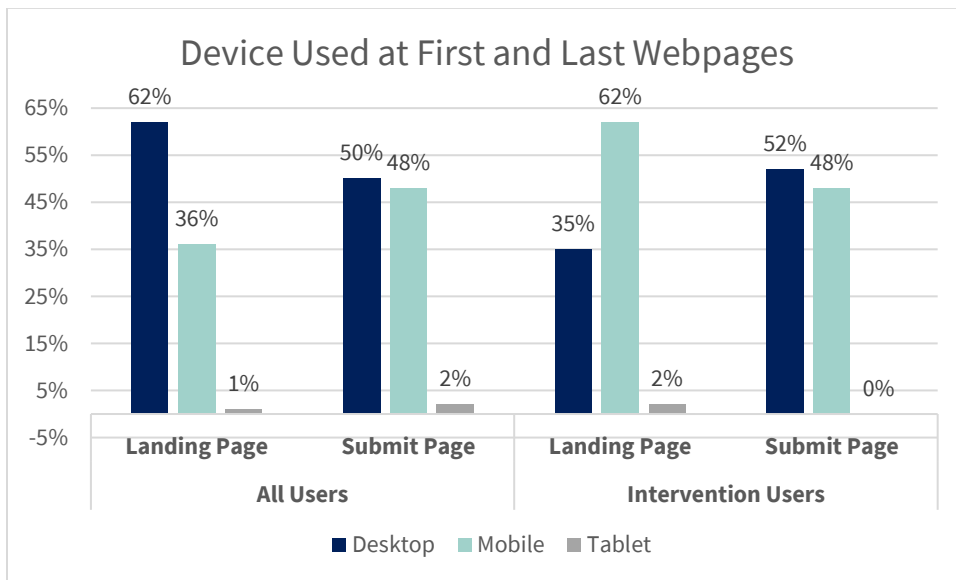
Google Analytics can track the types of devices visitors use when accessing webpages. Individuals who came to the two application-related webpages through the intervention’s advertisements mostly used a mobile device (62%), while overall users were most likely to access the webpages through a desktop device (62%). This suggests that close to two-thirds of intervention-initiated users clicked on an advertisement they saw on their mobile device. See Table 11.

Table 11. Comparison of Landing Page (eAppforservices & Apply-services) Device Use

Device	Overall Users		Intervention Users	
	Landing Page	Percent	Landing Page	Percent
Desktop	4,454	61.53%	1,021	35.24%
Mobile	2,677	36.98%	1,810	62.48%
Tablet	108	1.49%	66	2.28%
Total	7,239	NA	2,897	NA

Interestingly, device usage among intervention-initiated users was more similar to that of overall users at the end of the online application process, with 52% using a desktop computer on the ProcessSubmit page. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Device Used at First and Last Webpages



One of the purposes in updating the website in the first intervention was to make the site mobile friendly. The use of mobile devices illustrated here affirms the importance of a mobile-friendly website and online application.

Child Support Applications Submitted

While the intention of this intervention was to increase child support applications, the actual relationship between the intervention and application rates cannot be determined in the absence of an experimental research project. Instead, application-related information is examined for evidence that might suggest a relationship between the intervention and the applications received. Table 12 summarizes the number of new non-assistance child support applications received during the

intervention period of July 20, 2021, to September 28, 2021, and the same period in 2019. The year 2019 was used as the baseline instead of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its likely influence on child support application rates. The pandemic upended business as usual across the world and local and state child support physical offices were closed to the public. While the pandemic still persists, new modes of conducting business have been established and the disruption experienced in 2020 has eased to some extent. While it is not clear what impact the pandemic's disruption in 2020 had on child support enrollment rates, it is presumed 2019 is a more reasonable period to serve as a baseline for comparison of new child support applications.

Overall, new child support applications decreased by 22% from the baseline period to the intervention period for the state of Colorado as a whole. Among intervention counties, the rate of decrease was 16%, while non-intervention counties experienced a 26% decrease.

Table 12. Comparison of Child Support Applications During the Baseline and Intervention Periods

Applications	Baseline Period	Intervention Period	Difference	Percent Change
Total Statewide Applications	2,090	1,638	-452	-22%
Non-Intervention Counties	1,222	909	-313	-26%
Intervention County Applications	868	729	-139	-16%
% of Applications from Intervention Counties	41.5%	44.5%	NA	NA

Denver and Arapahoe Counties were the only intervention counties that experienced an increase in child support applications compared to baseline, while the other counties had fewer applications. These data are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Comparison of Child Support Applications Submitted by Intervention Counties

County	Baseline N=868	Intervention N=729	Difference	Percent Change
Adams	200	150	-50	25%
Arapahoe	254	260	6	2.36%
Boulder	69	32	-37	-53.62%
Delta	19	15	-4	-21.05%
Denver	338	405	67	19.82%
Montrose	28	16	-12	-42.86%
Total Child Support Applications Submitted	868	729	-139	-16.01%

The new online application process launched just prior to the start of this intervention. Previously, CSS' website hosted a hybrid online application where applicants could enter information online but then had to print out the application and submit a hard copy. The new process streamlined the information

collection, added resources to assist with completing the application, and included an online submission process. A comparison from the baseline to the intervention periods of web-initiated and total applications demonstrates a substantial increase in the number of web-based applications. There were 698 more web-based applications across the state in the intervention period than in the baseline period, for an increase of 148%. Conversely, the number of overall applications decreased by 452 or 22%. See Table 14.

Table 14. Comparison of Statewide New Web-Based and other Child Support Applications

Applications	Baseline	Intervention	Difference	% Change
Web-based	471	1,169	698	148.20%
All	2,090	1,638	-452	-21.63%

Both the intervention and other counties experienced increases in web-based applications as a proportion of all applications, but the shift to web-based applications in intervention counties (178%) was more substantial than in other counties (128%). See Table 15.

Table 15. Comparison of Intervention and Other County Web-Based Applications

Counties	Baseline Period		Intervention Period		Difference	% Change
	Frequency	% of all applications	Frequency	% of all applications		
Intervention Counties Web-based	189	9.04%	525	32.05%	336	177.78%
Other Counties Web-based	282	13.49%	644	39.32%	362	128.37%
All Counties Web-based	471	22.54%	1,169	71.37%	698	148.09%
All Applications	2,090	NA	1,638	NA	NA	NA

New Child Support Applicant Survey Responses

Invitations to participate in an online feedback survey were distributed via email to 797 new child support applicants who submitted an online application during the period of July 20 – September 16, 2021. After September 16, additional invitations to complete a survey appeared on the application submission confirmation page on the website through October 31, 2021. One hundred ninety-four individuals responded, with 175 completing the survey. A response rate cannot be determined as it is unknown how many individuals were invited to participate from the application submission webpage. Respondents received a gift card for \$20 as an incentive for completing the survey.

The survey was distributed only to new child support applicants who utilized the online application and was not intended to be representative of all the new non-assistance child support applications during

the intervention period. Responses could include those from individuals who submitted applications outside of the intervention period. The intent of the survey was two-fold: to gather feedback on the new online application process and to inquire if respondents recalled seeing the intervention advertisements.

The complete responses to each question in the survey are presented in tables in the Appendix. The overall results are summarized here:

Respondent Demographics and Types of Cases

- 175 respondents
- 39% of respondents were from intervention counties.
- 97% of respondents are custodial parents.
- The average age of respondents is 35.
- 33% of new applications were for child support and paternity establishment; 35% were for child support establishment, 27% were for enforcement on an already established order and 5% reopened a previous case.
- 30% of respondents have used child support services previously.

Application Process

- 60% of respondents reported completing the online application in one online session, 35% in two or three sessions, and 5% in more than three sessions.
- 40% of respondents contacted a child support office for assistance with enrollment.
- 31% of respondents found the overall process of applying for child support somewhat or extremely difficult, while 54% described it as extremely or somewhat easy.
- The most helpful tools for the online application were the instructions on how to complete the application (85%) and information on what child support can do for applicants (76%).
- The least used tools for the online application were the Frequently Asked Questions page (47%), use of the pin to return to the application (36%) and the glossary of child support terms (35%).
- 38% of respondents reported completing the online application using a smart phone, 49% used a personal computer or tablet, and 12% used a work computer.

Advertisements

- 21% (37) of survey respondents reporting seeing at least one of the advertisements used during the intervention.
- Of those who saw an advertisement:
 - 30% said they clicked on the advertisement, while 10% indicated they visited the website later.
 - 32% indicated the advertisement guided them to online application resources.
 - 30% felt the advertisement influenced when they submitted their application.
 - 27% felt the advertisement provided new information, including the availability of the online application (60%), child support can do paternity testing (20%) and child support can help change an existing order (20%).
 - 35% felt the advertisement gave them a more positive view of child support services, while 62% felt like the advertisements did not influence their opinion about child support.

A primary intent of the online application was to make the process of applying for child support easier, and the survey responses may be positive indicators that this is the case. Over half of the respondents reported that the application process was somewhat or extremely easy and 60% reported completing the application in one session.

Twenty-one percent of respondents reported that they recalled seeing at least one of the advertisements used during the intervention. Recall of advertisements is a topic of much investigation by marketers interested in increasing brand recognition and driving sales. Many factors contribute to advertising recall, such as the number of exposures, the length of time since the exposure, and many other factors. Relevant benchmarks to compare to the rate of recall reported by survey respondents is not readily available but recall by 21% or 37 of the survey respondents is encouraging and provides useful feedback. Thirty-five percent of those who recalled seeing the advertisement felt the advertisement enhanced their positive views of child support services. Sixty percent indicated the advertisement provided new information about the online application process. Since the availability of the online application process was central to all the advertisements, this is an encouraging response.

Analysis

1) How are remarketing, search retargeting and paid search advertisements associated with activity on the CSS *Apply-services* and *eAppforservices* webpages?

The metrics provided through the advertising reseller, Local Page Pop, and Google Analytics illustrate substantial website activity prompted by the advertisements. Forty-two percent (2,979) of all the landing page sessions on the *Apply-Services* and *eAppforservices* webpages originated with the remarketing, search retargeting, and paid search advertisements. The strongest performing type of advertising was paid search, which was responsible for 68% of the overall intervention-prompted website activity. All three advertisement types targeted individuals with previous and current web-based activities that signaled an interest in applying for child support, resulting in an overall click through rate of .96%. The previous intervention, Facebook Sponsored Advertising, targeted individuals presumed to be interested in child support services, based on gender, age, and zip code areas with high percentages of single parents. The Facebook intervention produced a click through rate of .02%, which is much less than this third intervention's click through rate.

2) Are remarketing, search retargeting and paid search advertisements associated with changes to the number of new child support applications from non-assistant enrollees?

The relationship between the intervention and new application rates cannot be determined in the absence of an experimental research project. Instead, application-related information is examined for evidence that might suggest a relationship between the intervention and the applications received. Through Google Analytics, there is evidence that at least 39 website users referred to the online application through the advertisements completed and submitted an online application. While the number of new child support applications decreased across the state and in the intervention counties, the rate of decrease in new child support applications, relative to a baseline period from the intervention counties, was less than that experienced by other counties. There was a large increase in the number of web-initiated applications, particularly in the intervention counties.

Twenty one percent of survey respondents who submitted new child support applications online recalled seeing at least one of the advertisements. One-quarter to a third of survey respondents who recalled the advertisements indicated the advertisements contributed to a more positive view of child support, provided new information, and influenced when they submitted their applications.

3) How are new applications submitted online associated with overall application activity?

In a comparison of the intervention period to a baseline period in 2019, the number of new online applications increased 148% over the previous hybrid online-paper applications.

4) What are the experiences of new enrollees who submitted their applications through the new online application?

Responses to a survey of new online application enrollees suggest most applicants completed the application in one session and the majority found the process to be extremely or somewhat easy, supported by instructional resources provided. Close to 40% of the respondents indicated they completed the application on a smart phone.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Lessons Learned

Deploying a completely online child support application has long been a goal for CSS, and this goal was realized during the third digital marketing intervention. New child support applicants took advantage of this opportunity with 43% submitting their applications online. Over half of respondents to a survey of new enrollees who submitted their applications online found the online application somewhat or extremely easy to complete, with 60% indicating they completed the application in one session. The value of a fully online application process is clear and will continue to serve applicants and CSS well in the future.

Paid search advertising performed very well during this intervention, producing substantial visits to the CSS website and engagement from viewers once they arrived at the site. All other types of advertisements in this and previous interventions have driven users to the website, but engagement

once they arrive has been elusive. Typically, users arrived at the designated webpage and left immediately. Paid search advertising reversed this trend and led some new enrollees directly to submission of online applications.

Next Steps

CSS has well utilized this digital marketing grant to advance its digital footprint. The updated webpage provides a critical and strong foundation to all other digital efforts. Experiments with different targeting and types of advertising has produced a clear front-runner with paid search advertising. While targeting advertisements to women in areas with higher rates of single parents (Facebook-sponsored advertising) may help inform potential applicants of services available, whether this leads to new applications cannot be determined. By contrast, paid search advertising has demonstrated engagement with the application process and submission of online applications. CSS would be well-served to continue to utilize this relatively inexpensive type of advertising to direct interested applicants to the online application. CSS could also consider utilizing remarketing advertising for individuals who start and then abandon the online application to prompt completion of the application.

Appendix – Survey Responses

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Table A1. Respondents County of Residence (N=175)

County of Residence	Frequency	Percent
Adams	10	5.71%
Arapahoe	22	12.57%
Boulder	8	4.57%
Denver	26	14.86%
Douglas	12	6.86%
El Paso	13	7.43%
Jefferson	14	8.00%
Larimer	11	6.29%
Mesa	8	4.57%
Montrose	2	1.14%
Pueblo	3	1.71%
Weld	18	10.29%
Other Counties	18	10.29%
Out of State	10	5.71%

Table A2. Survey Respondents from Intervention Counties (n=175)

Counties	Frequency	Percent
Intervention Counties	68	38.86%
Other	107	61.14%

Table A3. Applicant's Child Support Role and Average Age (n=174)

Role	Frequency	Percent
Receive child support (Custodial Parent)	168	96.54%
Pay child support (Noncustodial parent)	6	3.48%
Average Age (n=160)	34.5 years	

Table A4. Used Child Support Services Previously (n=164)

Used CS Services Previously	Frequency	Percent
Yes	49	29.88%
No	115	70.12%
Total	164	NA

Table A5. Type of Service Enrolled In (n=173)

Type of Service	Frequency	Percent
Enforcement or collections of payment on a child support order already set	46	26.58%
A new child support order with establishment of parentage/fatherhood	57	32.95%
A new child support order when parentage has already been established	61	35.26%
Reopening a previous case	9	5.20%

Table A6. Type of Device Used to Fill Out Application (n=173)

Device Type	Frequency	Percent
Smart phone	65	37.57%
Personal tablet or computer	84	48.55%
Work computer	21	12.14%
Multiple devices	3	1.73%

Table A7. Number of Visits to Website before Application Completion (n=174)

Number of Visits to Website	Frequency	Percent
I completed the application in one visit	104	59.77%
2-3 visits	61	35.06%
3-5 visits	4	2.30%
More than five visits	5	2.87%

Table A8. Called or Visited Child Support Office for Help with Enrollment (n=164)

Called or Visited Child Support Office	Frequency	Percent
Yes, more than once	28	17.18%
Yes, once	38	23.31%
No	97	59.51%

Table A9. How Helpful Were These Aspects of the Online Application Platform?

Helpfulness	How to complete application (n=174)		What child support can do for you (n=173)		Calculating child support (n=171)		Frequently asked questions (n=173)		Glossary of child support terms (n=171)		Using PIN to return to application (n=173)	
	#	Percent	#	Percent	#	Percent	#	Percent	#	Percent	#	Percent
Very or Somewhat Helpful	148	85.06%	131	75.72%	97	56.73%	66	38.15%	96	56.14%	92	53.18%
Somewhat Unhelpful or Very Unhelpful	17	9.77%	27	15.61%	24	14.04%	25	14.45%	16	9.36%	18	10.40%
Did not use	9	5.17%	15	8.67%	50	29.24%	82	47.40%	59	34.50%	63	36.42%

Table A10. How Easy or Difficult was the Process of Applying for Child Support? (n=164)

How Easy or Difficult	Frequency	Percent
Extremely or Somewhat easy	88	53.66%
Neither easy nor difficult	25	15.24%
Somewhat or Extremely difficult	51	31.10%

Table A11. Click on Advertisement? (n=37)

Click on Advertisement	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	29.73%
No	20	54.05%
I'm not sure	2	5.41%
No, but I visited the webpage later	4	10.81%

Table A12. Did the Advertisement Help Guide You to Online Resources? (n=37)

Advertisement Helped	Frequency	Percent
Yes	12	32.43%
Maybe	6	16.22%
No	13	35.14%
I'm not sure	6	16.22%

Table A13. Did the Advertisement Supply New Information? (n=37)

Advertisement Supplied New Information	Frequency	Percent
Yes	10	27.03%
No	16	43.24%
Not sure	11	29.73%

Table A14. Type of New Information Gained from Advertisements? (n=10)

New Information from Ads	Frequency	Percent
Child Support can collect payments for me.	1	10.00%
Child Support can do paternity testing.	2	20.00%
Child Support can establish a child support order.	0	0.00%
Child Support can help change an existing child support order.	2	20.00%
I can apply for child support online.	6	60.00%

Table A15. Advertisement Influenced When I Submitted my Application? (n=37)

Advertisement Influenced	Frequency	Percent
Strongly or Somewhat agree	11	29.73%
Neither agree nor disagree	20	54.05%
Somewhat or strongly disagree	6	16.22%

Table A16. Did Advertisement Change Opinion about Child Support Services? (n=37)

Advertisement Changed Opinion	Frequency	Percent
The advertisements gave me a more positive opinion about child support services.	13	35.14%
The advertisements prompted a more negative opinion about child support services.	1	2.70%
The advertisements did not influence my opinion about child support services.	23	62.16%