

## New Phrase Spurs More Parents to Apply for Support

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As reported in my article *Changing Just One Word Can Make a Big Difference* in the September 2019 *Child Support Report*, Indiana has been experimenting with how words affect behavior. Could the office drive more participation in its child support program by changing terminology? The team started with a single word, “apply.” By changing the word apply to “enroll,” they saw significant impacts to web traffic clicking through to the online application. This confirmed the team’s belief that words have a direct correlation to the way people perceive Indiana’s services, and it impacts their behavior.

### Testing more terms

After the first success, the team continued to test a wide range of new words hoping to find the ones that would motivate citizens to take the first steps towards participating in Indiana’s Child Support program. They tested several terms including Getting Started, Register, Sign Me Up, and Open a Case. The impact of these words were even more pronounced. With these new words, the number of website visitors that clicked through to the online application was nearly double the number using the word “enroll”!

The biggest improvement came when they used the phrase *Getting Started*. This simple phrase increased the click-through rate by 115%. The team believes this phrase resonated the most with website visitors because it best matched their interest and had a noncommittal feel. They have a need, and they are looking for a place to start. *Getting Started* gave them a big road sign to the beginning of their journey.

### Applying lessons learned

Based on the surveys during the planning phase, one of the biggest challenges in Indiana is program awareness. The largest intervention will involve running digital ad campaigns in participating counties. They want digital ads to be based on the results of early interventions so they’ll feature a call to action using words that worked best in early interventions.

Campaigns will also be broken into multiple groups and test various components of the digital ads such as the image, the tagline, and the message. Using a

## Increasing Awareness of Services through Digital Marketing

OCSE awarded \$2.2 million to 14 grantees through a two-year demonstration called **Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program**. This is one of a series of articles featuring grantees using digital marketing innovations to reach and serve families more effectively.

For general information, contact OCSE project officers at [Michelle.Jadczak@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Michelle.Jadczak@acf.hhs.gov) or [Melody.Morales@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Melody.Morales@acf.hhs.gov).

random control trial evaluation method, the team hopes to determine which combinations of components work best for Indiana citizens, and whether they need to use different digital ad campaigns across geographical areas or demographics. Once they find the best performing digital ad campaigns, they can use them statewide to drive more awareness of the program.

Additionally, the team is planning to do a deeper dive into their website terminology. They’ll start with randomized A/B testing of the Application page to remove the word “apply” entirely and replace it with variations of the phrase *Getting started with services*. Some visitors will see *Getting started with Child Support services*, while others will see *Getting started with IV-D services*. The team hopes to determine whether terminology such as IV-D is confusing to Indianans. They’re excited about working with OCSE to conduct this research.

If you’d like to follow Indiana’s progress or have questions about their processes, email [CSBDigitalResearch@dcs.in.gov](mailto:CSBDigitalResearch@dcs.in.gov).

