

DIGITAL MARKETING GRANTS

Early Results in Virginia Suggest the Power of Digital Engagement

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When Virginia received the [Digital Marketing Demonstration Grant](#), we went right to work planning the three interventions we developed to increase applications from Never Assistance clients.

During our first cycle, which ended in September 2019, we worked with our internal project partner, the public affairs unit of the [Virginia Department of Social Services](#), to update our website in line with search engine optimization (SEO) recommendations made by our project vendor, Grays Peak Strategies. We then created a [project-specific splash page](#), logo, and customer contact form.

As part of our market research, we analyzed caseload data and Census data to estimate specific locations of unserved customers in the Commonwealth. We settled on approximately 23 areas to target with Google ads. Our initial set of ads were delivered by Google's Search network, which inserts text-based ads into user's search results. During the second and third months of the first cycle, we also placed image-based ads through Google's Display network, which distributes ads through websites and in apps to a much broader set of users.

When potential customers clicked on those ads, they were taken to our splash page and urged to fill out the contact form. Customers who did so were counted as conversions and contacted within two days by representatives at our Enterprise Customer Contact Center. According to Google, a *conversion* is "an action that's counted when someone interacts with your ad (for example, clicks a text ad or views a video ad) and then takes an action that you've defined as valuable to your business, such as an online purchase or a call to your business from a mobile phone."

Our original ad targeting included demographic indicators that would only display ads to individuals identified as parents. We soon discovered this somehow caused Google not to display any ads, so we moved to using only geographic targeting.

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.Jadczyk@acf.hhs.gov or Melody.Morales@acf.hhs.gov.



Staff from the Virginia Department of Social Services

Below is a list of outcomes from cycle 1:

- New website users increased by 42%
- Search ad click-through rate was 7.78% (goal was 1.5%)
- Cost per conversion was \$13.44
- 554 online contact form submissions were received
- Approximately 40 new cases have opened based on these ads, as of mid-November 2019

We are in cycle 2, which includes an [online application](#) and organic and [paid social media ads](#). Stay tuned for updates!

For more information about Virginia's digital marketing work, contact David Ramm at david@grayspeakstrategies.com or Mariellen Keely at mariellen.keely@dss.virginia.gov.