

Sacramento County's Paid Social Media Ads

Alix Haik-Bruno, Program Manager, *Department of Child Support Services, Sacramento County, California*

Like many other child support agencies across the country, the Department of Child Support Services in Sacramento County, California, is experiencing a decline in parents opening new cases. We're not sure if the trend is because parents don't know about our services or if other factors are keeping them from opening a case. Our first step to fix this situation is to make sure that all potential applicants know who we are and what services we provide so they can at least consider opening a case.

Locally, D.O.M.E. is the acronym we use to distinguish our Digital Outreach and Media Engagement activities from our other outreach or community engagement efforts. We're testing the delivery of video ads that encourage prospective applicants to submit an application. Sacramento is primarily interested in reaching parents who are not cash-aid recipients but receive other types of assistance such as food stamps, Medicaid, or health insurance subsidies through the health insurance marketplace.

D.O.M.E. uses digital marketing platforms such as social media and e-mail to deliver our video ad message to prospective custodial parents who are unaware of our services or undecided about pursuing a child support case in Sacramento County. We'll have three road tests, with two built upon the lessons learned from the prior test because

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 or Melody.Morales@acf.hhs.gov.

we're using the Learn, Innovate, Improve, or LI2 process, which was created with the support of ACF's Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (see sidebar on next page). To help us understand this LI2 framework and ensure that other agencies can use our tests and findings, Sacramento contracted with MEF Associates to conduct the technical assistance and evaluation aspect of the project.

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At the start of our first road test, we conducted a small focus group with mothers in our target population to understand their stories. Our notes helped us create storyboards and taglines for a [30-second ad](#) that would resonate with other parents going through similar

continued



situations. A local videographer with experience creating similar ads helped us produce the video.

One of our team members played the role of a busy mother tackling her morning routine. The video conveys the message that we understand life can be hectic for parents, but they can rely on us to help them navigate the child support program. Finally, we allocated the same budget to Facebook and YouTube so we could compare how the ad would perform on each platform individually and determine whether it would increase the application submission rate for our agency overall.

Viewership was high

We had nearly 642,000 impressions and almost 184,000 views across both platforms using a combined monthly cost of \$6,000. The budget was more than sufficient to cover our target population in Sacramento County. Unlike traditional marketing methods, digital platforms allow you to narrow down your audience, resulting in a more efficient use of the budget.

One of the main lessons we learned from our first road test, though, is that viewership does not necessarily translate into action. If your ultimate objective is for your audience to take action (like submitting an application), viewing a video ad is not sufficient.

During the test, YouTube achieved significantly more views than Facebook, but it received fewer clicks leading to the online application because the positioning of the URL was not as conspicuous on YouTube as it was on Facebook. Facebook frames their ads with a call to action such as “Apply now” or “Learn more” and that seems to have engaged viewers more effectively, resulting in more clicks.

Note that YouTube and Facebook have different filters for selecting the viewers you want to expose your message to. Facebook has more control in ensuring that the filters are being met while YouTube will have a higher number of “unknowns.” For our purpose, Facebook seemed more precise.

Future tests

We’ll use feedback received through the social media platforms about the content of the video ad and other questions associated with the child support program to inform and design the next versions.

During our next phase, we’ll deliver the second version of our video ad by e-mail through a partnership with the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance. For our third road test, we’ll also partner with local agencies, but we’ll go back to social media for delivery and use organic posts to reach our partners’ existing followers.

For more information about Sacramento’s D.O.M.E. Project, contact Alix Haik-Bruno at haik-brunoa@saccounty.net.

Learn, Innovate, and Improve to Enhance Programs

Victoria Kabak, Research Analyst, ACF Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

The “Learn, Innovate, Improve” (LI2) framework is a systematic, research-based approach to program improvement. It embeds analytic methods into an organization’s process to design, implement, and repeat test program changes. The process involves a series of evidence-informed activities that others can duplicate and are supported by collaboration between practitioners and applied researchers. LI2 brings social science theory, research evidence, and practice wisdom together to create innovations that are practical, effective, scalable, and sustainable.

LI2 Phases:

- Learn: practitioners clarify their reasons for seeking change and the specific problem or problems they are trying to solve
- Innovate: participants work to identify and prioritize potential solutions to the problems defined during the learning phase
- Improve: participants assess their program changes through one or more “road tests” or other evaluation methods

For more information, read the overview brief [Learn, Innovate, Improve \(LI2\): Enhancing Programs and Improving Lives](#) published by OPRE.