

California Focuses their Site on Service

Outreach and Media Response Team, *Office of Communication and Public Affairs, California Department of Child Support Services*

The outreach team at [California Child Support Services](#) knew that their website needed an overhaul. Crowded, text-heavy, and hard to navigate, it was built in an outdated programming language and contained more than 150 webpages with hundreds of attachments.

As part of their successful application for the [OCSE Digital Marketing grant](#), the team proposed building a small, standalone site for grant activities using a customized WordPress platform launched by the California Department of Technology in 2015. After reviewing the plan during the grant feasibility stage, the child support director challenged the outreach team to overhaul the entire website in just two short months.

Grant Project Manager Nicole Darracq and Public Information Officer Chad Reed had to inventory all 150 webpages so they knew the extent of the overhaul. To make informed decisions, they worked closely with teams from Systems Support, Enterprise Architecture, Website Administration, and Web Publishing, and used analytics from existing site traffic. Darracq and Reed discarded outdated information, moved old records to internal resource applications, and shifted the new site's focus toward being a resource for information-seeking parents with or without an existing case.

Market research from a previous branding project helped with the new site's design. The team replaced images of children, parents, and caseworkers with emotionally neutral California landscapes, which added intimacy by being instantly recognizable to locals. They simplified the language and redesigned navigation for new visitors who might not yet know if they are a custodial or noncustodial party. Today, parents see a simple infographic of the child support case process right on the home page. Each icon links to a more detailed description of that step and often includes an informational video. Acronyms were removed wherever possible. The site became mobile-friendly, instantly adapting layout and navigation for viewing on mobile devices, and translatable into over 100 languages using the Google Translate plug-in with an appropriate disclaimer.

At the same time, the department's Innovation Design team began to rebuild [Customer Connect](#), California's online case management platform, to improve its

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.

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performance and add mobile views. According to the Pew Research Center, over one in five Americans access the internet ONLY on smartphones, with percentages higher in the under-40 age bracket. The redesigned Customer Connect went live just hours before the new 45-page website was released in May.

"It was a massive job," says Dana Simas, child support assistant director and head of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs, which now manages the ongoing maintenance of the website. "To rebuild something like that in 13 weeks took committed collaboration with our IT teams. We're all proud to have created something that demonstrates the best practices of a customer-service focused agency."

For information about the California Department of Child Support Services grant work, contact Nicole Darracq in the Office of Communication and Public Affairs, nicole.darracq@dcss.ca.gov.

