

Using Digital Communication to Reach Parents

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Many Americans have changed the way they consume news and information in the past few years. If that includes you, you're not alone. The [Pew Research Center](#) reports that the percentage of Americans who prefer online news sources increased from 28% to 34% between 2016 and 2018. It stands to reason that the Washington State Division of Child Support (DCS) would turn to online methods to share the benefits of child support. That's where the eyes are.

We know that we need to learn how to marshal digital communication strategies in order to stay relevant to parents. For our OCSE digital marketing grant project, we're working with a communications company and the Center for Policy Research to develop, launch, and evaluate three time-bound digital advertising campaigns. Those campaigns are Facebook sponsored ads, email flyers, and streaming audio ads. We're trying three popular yet distinct platforms in order to learn as much as possible during the two-year grant period.

Working smarter

We've learned that the social media platform most used by women ages 30-45 is Facebook. We're using Google Analytics to find out how people are clicking on our ads to get to our DCS webpage. And we know that 77% of visitors to our [Enroll for Child Support Services](#) page are using a mobile device. We've made our website more user- and mobile-friendly and used Facebook ad targeting tools to reach potential custodial parents. Posting ads on Facebook seems to have had an effect; DCS website visits tripled during the first campaign period.

Phase 2 – emailing parents

We sent flyers through a commercial digital management platform that school districts use to send flyers to students' parents. As we complete the evaluation of our second online campaign, we continue to learn which messages, photos, and digital platforms reach parents best. Our school campaign tested two messages about the benefits of child support and one message encouraging parents to consider requesting a modification when their life situations change. Our third digital campaign, taking place in late spring 2020, will give us another chance to

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.

hone our digital messaging, this time through audio ads on a streaming radio service.

While increasing awareness and participation in the child support program remains our primary focus, we are also excited to "build the marketing bench" in our division. Several of our staff members are now working towards a certificate in digital marketing. One of the biggest benefits of this project may be that it will help prepare agency staff to meet future marketing challenges.

To learn more about Washington State's digital marketing campaigns, contact Jorji Knickrehm at jorji.knickrehm@dshs.wa.gov.

