STATE OF INDIANA

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES (DCS)

CHILD SUPPORT BUREAU (CSB)

Award No. 90FD0211

USING DIGITAL MARKETING TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN THE CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM

INTERVENTION 3: CSB WEBSITE UPDATES

EVALUATION REPORT

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PURPOSE OF DIGITAL MARKETING GRANT PROGRAM

The Digital Marketing grant program, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, is a 24-month demonstration project with the goal of researching how digital marketing may help the child support program more effectively reach and serve families. In September 2018, OCSE awarded funds to 14 child support agencies to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents that could benefit from child support services, and create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents.

The Indiana Child Support Bureau (CSB) was selected as one of the grant recipients and is implementing the CSB Digital Marketing Outreach Project in fulfillment of the grant. Indiana is focusing on four different components across multiple interventions designed to test the efficacy of digital marketing and digital tools to raise awareness about, and engage eligible families in, the Indiana child support Program. The four components consist of website updates, digital marketing, chat, and two-way communication. The goals of the project include increasing:

A. General awareness about the child support program

B. The number of families served by increasing the child support caseload

C. Access to the child support program through new two-way digital communication

PROBLEM TARGETED BY INTERVENTION 3: CSB WEBSITE UPDATES

Based on surveys, focus groups, Behavioral Interventions in Child Support (BICS)/Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) projects, expert recommendations, and analysis of website traffic acquired during the planning phase, we believed that program participants viewed the child support program website content negatively. These negative views may have been a result of:

- Difficulty locating information
- Fears that an application would be denied/rejected
- A perception that the application process is excessively burdensome
- Confusion about our terminology

Intervention 3 was designed to test potential solutions to these problems with small, targeted content changes.

The Digital Marketing grant team was formed during the planning phase and included the Core Project team led by the Project Director/Principal Investigator, the Evaluation team, and the Data Services team. This team defined and prioritized the problem through a series of collaborative internal discussions intermixed with formal outreach to external experts. Factors such as implementation effort of content updates, timing and approvals, and availability of tools were taken into account.

Prior to the intervention our team engaged with multiple experts to analyze and suggest improvements to our website content that would promote a positive user experience with the aim of fueling increased participation in the program. Our team also believed that phrasing used to describe our services, such as "IV-D Services," was negatively impacting participation in the program. Specifically, we believed the terms "IV-D," "Prosecutor," and "DCS" (the acronym for Department of Child Services) were deterrents. We believed "IV-D" was a confusing term

that potential participants do not understand, and "Prosecutor" and "DCS" larger deterrents due to their enforcement associations outside of child support.

INTERVENTION 3: WEBSITE UPDATES

Intervention 3 focused on making changes to the Indiana Child Support website that aimed to have a positive impact on participation and to determine if the user experience and content phrasing influenced navigation and engagement. The team, through a series of collaborative discussions held over three months, brainstormed road tests for each intervention. During these collaborative discussions, we selected five independent road tests for the third intervention that expand upon the testing of words and their impact on behavior that we began in interventions 1 and 2. These road tests were of small, targeted changes to the website, with four new phrasings for the link to our online enrollment form that we compared against a control phrase.

ROAD TESTS 9, 10, 11, 12, & 13 – APPLICATION LINKS

The team worked with our agency's internal webmasters to change the wording on the link to our online enrollment form. Using Google Optimize to randomly but evenly distribute web traffic, we conducted a randomized controlled trial consisting of a control page and four variant pages over 90 days. Any visitor to the website had an equal chance of seeing any of the five variants. Additionally, once a visitor was assigned to a variant based on their user session, any repeat visit to the website would assign them to the same variant. We used "Getting Started with Services" as the control link because "Getting Started" had the highest performance from tests conducted during interventions 1 and 2. Our first variant was "Getting Started with Child Support Services." The team chose this as a variant to identify potential impact between generic terms and program specific terms. For our other three variants, we prefixed the term "Services" with terms that the team believed to be confusing or have negative associations: "IV-D," "Prosecutor," and "DCS." We chose "IV-D" because surveys and focus groups conducted during our planning phase indicated that potential participants might be confused by the term "IV-D" due to a lack of knowledge regarding the term and its association with child support. The surveys and focus groups also indicated potential confusion about the child support office's location within the county prosecutor's office and potential fear about county prosecutor involvement due to their enforcement role, both within and outside the program in Indiana. Additionally, the DCS was indicated in surveys and focus groups as another potentially confusing term because it's an agency acronym that potential participants aren't familiar with except when dealing with the Child Protective Services, which is part of DCS.

The randomized controlled trial targeted all visitors to our enrollment page, with a total of 16,029 unique user sessions and an average of 3,206 unique user sessions per page variant over the 90-day intervention, to determine what impact the wording of the links would have on the click-through rate to the online enrollment form. The team decided on a 90-day duration to maximize the amount of web traffic measured and observe fluctuations in the data over time. Using Google Analytics, the team measured the population of visitors to the enrollment page variants, and the number of visitors who subsequently clicked a link to the online enrollment form. We used these two measurements to calculate the click-through rate for the online enrollment form, which is the ratio of enrollment form link clicks over the population of visitors. The team captured these measurements for the control and the four variants over the 90-day intervention, which began on December 1, 2019 and ended on February 28, 2020.

Figure 1. Sessions and Click-through Rates by Term Used

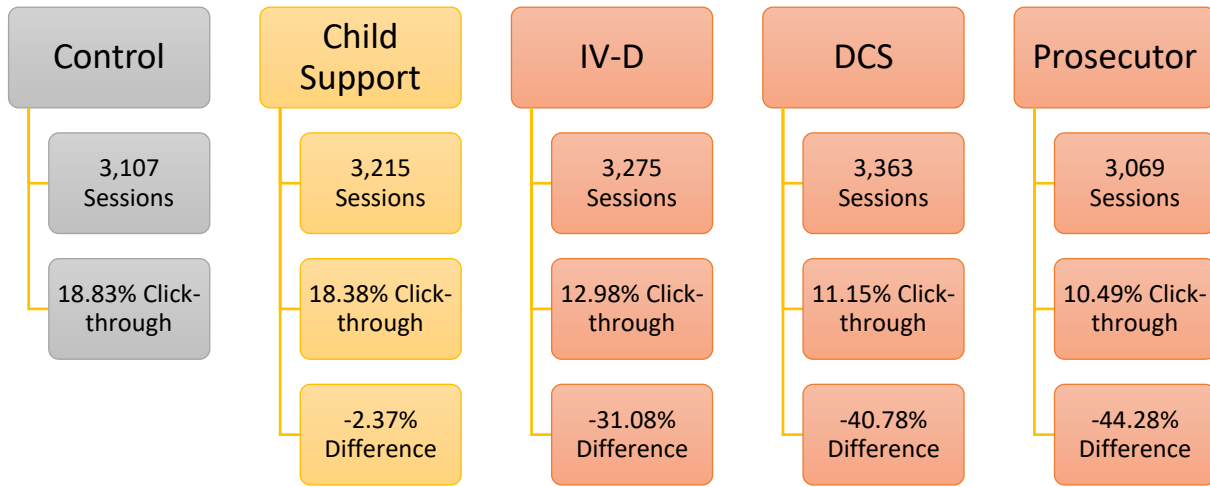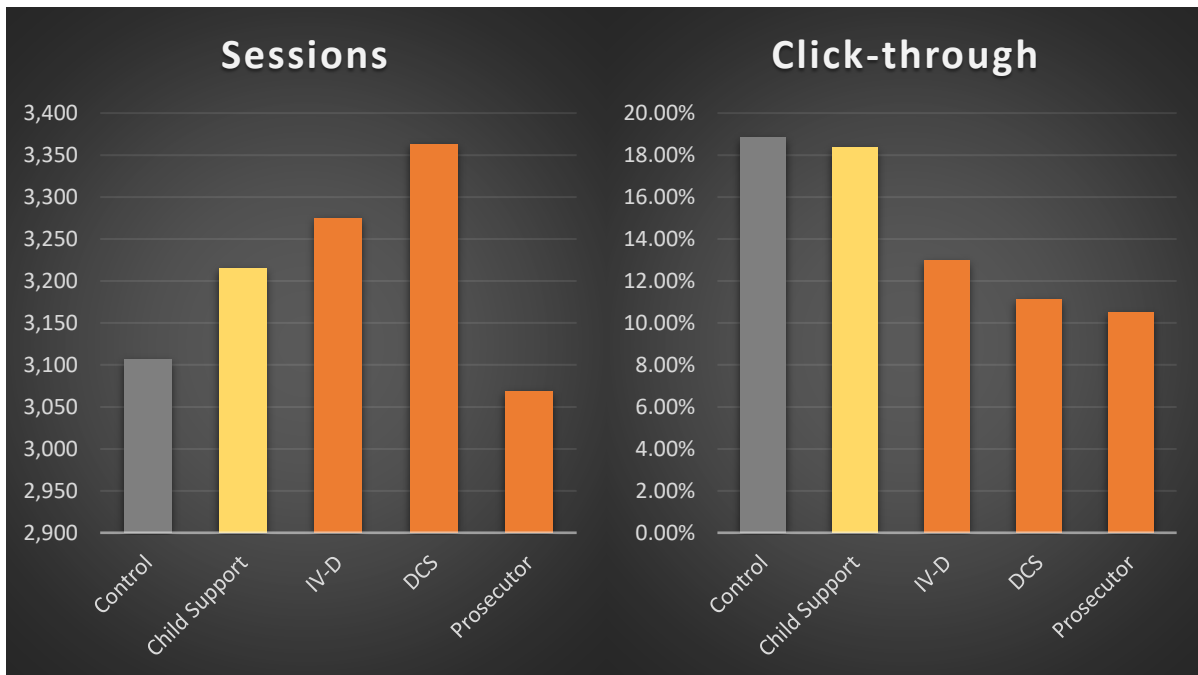| Control	Child Support	IV-D	DCS	Prosecutor
3,107 Sessions	3,215 Sessions	3,275 Sessions	3,363 Sessions	3,069 Sessions
18.83% Click-through	18.38% Click-through	12.98% Click-through	11.15% Click-through	10.49% Click-through
	-2.37% Difference	-31.08% Difference	-40.78% Difference	-44.28% Difference

Figure 2. Bar Chart of Sessions and Click-through Rates by Term Used

As shown in Figure 1 and 2, our control (road test 9), which used the wording "**Getting Started with Services**" for the online enrollment form link, reached 3,107 visitors. Of these visitors, 585 (18.83%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. The team used a chi-squared test of independence to validate statistical significance of the

measured values. With four degrees of freedom across all variants, the team selected a 0.1% probability threshold, with a critical value of 18.47. The team measured a test value of 163.56, meeting this threshold and indicating statistical significance of our measurements.

The variant for road test 10 used the wording "**Getting Started with Child Support Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 3,215 visitors. Of these visitors, 591 (18.38%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 0.45 points (2.37%) less than the control group. Although this met the 1% threshold the team set for outcomes of interest, when the team performed a chi-squared test of independence for only this variant against the control it did not meet the threshold for statistical significance. With one degree of freedom for this variant, the team again selected a 0.1% probability threshold, with a critical value of 10.83. The team measured a test value of 0.21, which did not meet this threshold and indicated that the variation was not statistically significant. This indicates that this variant could be considered similar in nature to the control and that visitors are just as likely to click the link that uses "Getting Started with Child Support Services" as one that uses "Getting Started with Services."

The variant for road test 11 used the wording "**Getting Started with IV-D Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 3,275 visitors. Of these visitors, 425 (12.98%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 5.85 points (31.08%) less than the control group. This met the 1% threshold the team set for outcomes of interest, and when the team performed a chi-squared test of independence for only this variant against the control it met the threshold for statistical significance. With one degree of freedom for this variant, the team again selected a 0.1% probability threshold, with a critical value of 10.83. The team measured a test value of 40.98, which exceeded this threshold and indicated that the variation was statistically significant. This indicates that visitors are less likely to click "Getting Started with IV-D Services" than "Getting Started with Services."

The variant for road test 13 used the wording "**Getting Started with DCS Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 3,363 visitors. Of these visitors, 375 (11.15%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 7.68 points (40.78%) less than the control group. This met the 1% threshold the team set for outcomes of interest, and when the team performed a chi-squared test of independence for only this variant against the control it met the threshold for statistical significance. With one degree of freedom for this variant, the team again selected a 0.1% probability threshold, with a critical value of 10.83. The team measured a test value of 75.34, which exceeded this threshold and indicated that the variation was statistically significant. This indicates that visitors are less likely to click "Getting Started with DCS Services" than "Getting Started with Services.

The variant for road test 12 used the wording "**Getting Started with Prosecutor Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 3,069 visitors. Of these visitors, 322 (10.49%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 8.34 points (44.28%) less than the control group. This met the 1% threshold the team set for outcomes of interest, and when the team performed a chi-squared test of independence for only this variant against the control it met the threshold for statistical significance. With one degree of freedom for this variant, the team again selected a 0.1% probability threshold, with a critical value of 10.83. The team measured a test value of 85.64, which exceeded this threshold and indicated that the variation was statistically significant. This indicates that visitors are less likely to click "Getting Started with Prosecutor Services" than "Getting Started with Services."

ANALYSIS

While we do not have data on why visitors clicked some variants less than others, the lower click-through rates of some variants suggest our hypothesis may be correct and that the terms "IV-D," "Prosecutor," and "DCS" may be confusing and/or have negative associations. As shown in Figure 3, the daily comparison of variant click-through rates shows a consistent trend over the 90-day intervention, with a lot of fluctuation up to day 10 or 13. This may

be due to returning visitors from the week prior to the intervention, who may have noticed the change in the page and reacted to the difference. The term "Prosecutor" had the lowest click-through rate of all the variants, and we believe this is due to an association between prosecutors and the court system. We believe this association can create confusion and hesitation about engaging with the Indiana Child Support program. Based on these findings, the team has inferred that wording of content does have an impact on the actions of visitors to the Child Support webpage. The team is also recommending that terms such as "IV-D," "Prosecutor," and "DCS" be removed from website content to eliminate any potential negative impact on program participation.

Figure 3. 90-day Comparison of Variant Click-through Rates
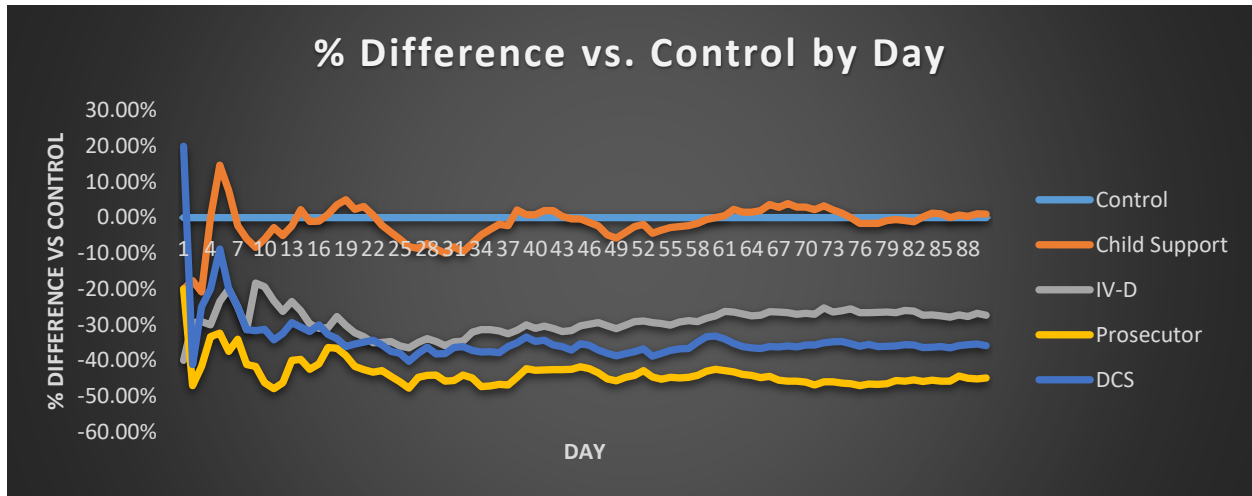
LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Our biggest takeaway from this intervention is that agency-specific or technical terms might be confusing to potential participants and impact their decisions to move forward to next steps in the enrollment process. The removal of these terms might drive positive behavior and potentially drive increased participation. Our team is planning to take additional steps in upcoming interventions to continue evaluating the terms used in intervention 3 to refine our analysis. The team recommends an additional intervention to see if these results are also produced when the terms are observed with a less generic control and variants. The team recommends the next intervention use "Getting Started with Child Support Services" as the control and variants such as "Getting Started with DCS Child Support Services."

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

CHAT

Any informal digital conversation between a non-participating citizen and an Indiana Child Support resource.

DIGITAL MARKETING

Any advertising with a digital component intended to promote the Indiana Child Support program.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

An integrated data-and-marketing analysis product that analyzes consumer behavior and interactions with digital properties.

GOOGLE OPTIMIZE

An online integrated split-testing product that enables websites to experiment with content through A/B testing, multivariate testing, or redirect testing.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Any process in which an Indiana Child Support resource can send, receive, and respond to information to/from a citizen.

WEBSITE UPDATE

Any change to the HTML documents or web services that impacts citizen interactions with Indiana Department of Child Services web content. (http://www.in.gov/DCS/)