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 4: CSB WEBSITE UPDATES

EVALUATION REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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 4: 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 resulted from:

- 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 4 expanded upon intervention 3 and tested potential solutions to these problems by refining the intervention 3 road tests.

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 to fuel 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 while we thought "CSB" (the acronym for Child Support Bureau) was not. We believed "IV-D" was a confusing term that potential participants do not understand and that "Prosecutor"

and "DCS" were larger deterrents due to their enforcement associations outside of child support. Intervention 3 confirmed there was a lower rate of enrollment forms when these terms were used and that "DCS" and "Prosecutor" had even lower rates than "IV-D". This seems to support the team beliefs about these terms being confusing or having negative associations.

INTERVENTION 4: WEBSITE UPDATES

Intervention 4 focused on changing 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 one month following intervention 3, brainstormed road tests for the intervention. During these collaborative discussions, we selected five independent road tests for the fourth intervention that expand upon testing words and their impact on behavior we began in intervention 3. These road tests were of small, targeted changes to the website, with the same phrasings for the link to our online enrollment form used in intervention 3 but with "Child Support" added and were compared against a control phrase of just "Child Support".

ROAD TESTS 14, 15, 16, 17, & 18 – ENROLLMENT FORM 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 Child Support Services" as the control link because it performed equivalent to the control in intervention 3. Our first variant was "Getting Started with CSB Child Support Services." For our other three variants, we prefixed the term "Child Support Services" with terms the team believed were confusing or have negative associations: "IV-D," "Prosecutor," and "DCS." "IV-D" was chosen 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, and we believe it was confirmed by the results of intervention 3. 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, "DCS" was indicated in surveys and focus groups as another potentially confusing term because it is an agency acronym that potential participants aren't familiar with except when dealing with the Child Protective Services, which is part of DCS. This was also confirmed by the results of intervention 3. We also included "CSB" as a variant as it is the acronym for our Child Support Bureau, and we thought it would not be a deterrent because CSB has been providing child support services in Indiana for over 40 years.

The randomized controlled trial targeted all visitors to our enrollment page, with 23,207 unique user sessions and an average of 4,641 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 June 1, 2020 and ended on August 29, 2020. This intervention was originally scheduled to begin March 1, 2020, but was delayed due the COVID-19 shutdown in Indiana.
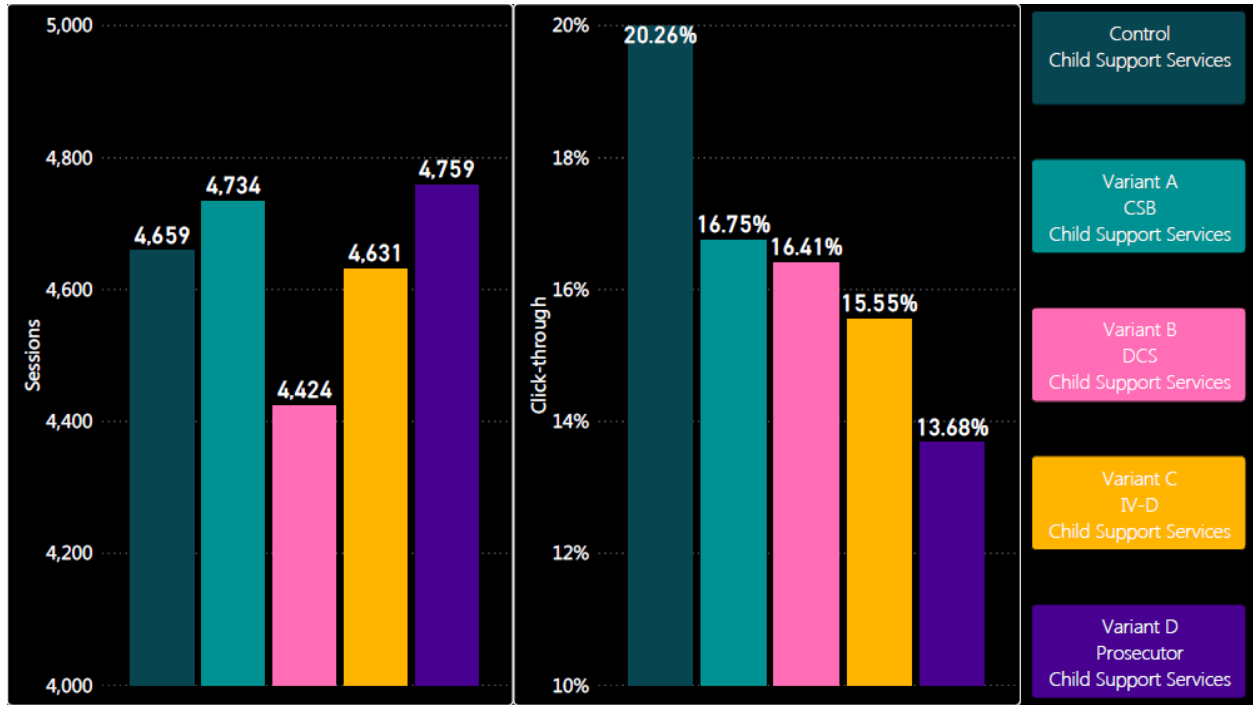
Figure 1

As shown in Figure 1 our control, which used the wording "**Getting Started with Child Support Services**" for the online enrollment form link, reached 4,659 visitors. Of these visitors, 944 (20.26%) 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 78.54, meeting this threshold and indicating statistical significance of our measurements (Figure 2).
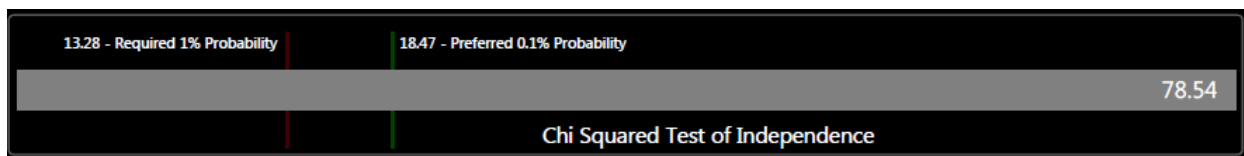

Figure 2

This test value grew almost continuously throughout the experiment and was trending sharply upward even in the last 10 days of the experiment providing high confidence in the results (Figure 3).
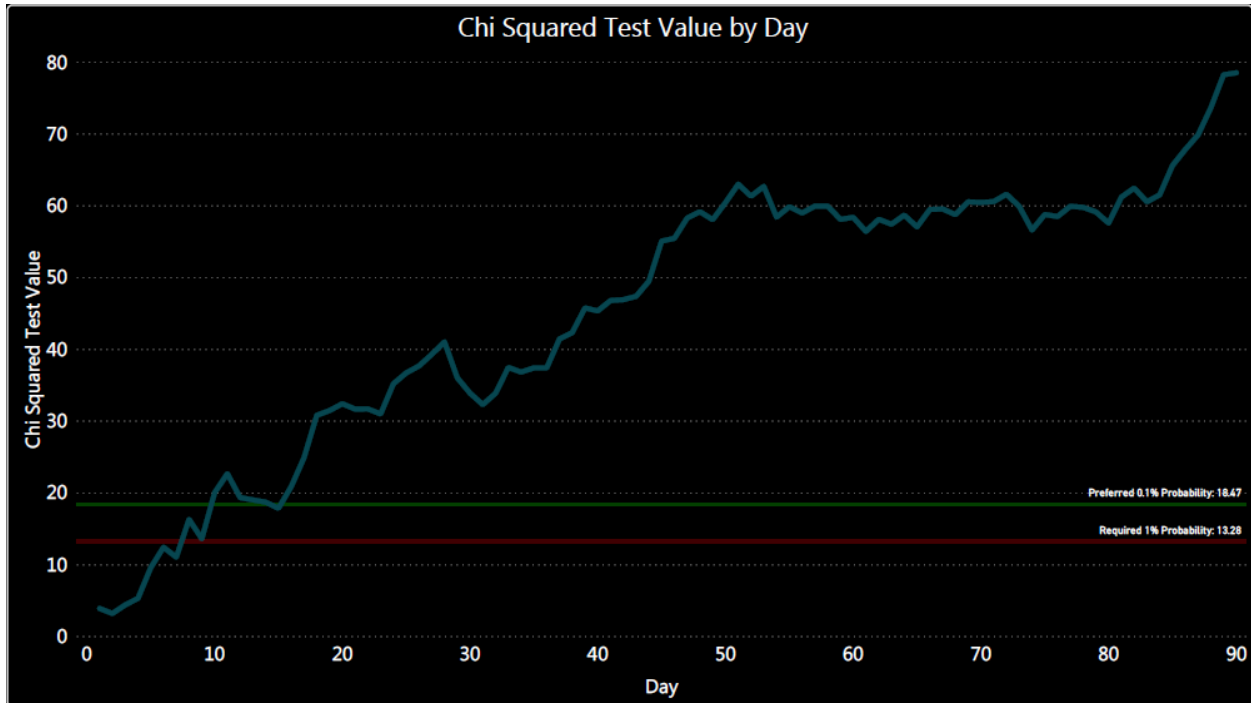
Figure 3

The variant for road test 15 used the wording "**Getting Started with CSB Child Support Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 4,734 visitors. Of these visitors, 793 (16.75%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 3.75 points (17.33%) 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 19.20, which exceeded this threshold and indicated that the variation was statistically significant. This indicates that visitors are less likely to click the link that uses "Getting Started with CSB Child Support Services" than "Getting Started with Child Support Services."

The variant for road test 16 used the wording "**Getting Started with IV-D Child Support Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 4,631 visitors. Of these visitors, 720 (15.55%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 4.71 points (23.27%) 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 35.11, 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 Child Support Services" than "Getting Started with Child Support Services."

The variant for road test 17 used the wording "**Getting Started with DCS Child Support Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 4,424 visitors. Of these visitors, 726 (16.41%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 3.85 points (19.01%) 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 72.51, 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 Child Support Services" than "Getting Started with Child Support Services."

The variant for road test 18 used the wording "**Getting Started with Prosecutor Child Support Services**" for the online enrollment form link and reached 4,759 visitors. Of these visitors, 651 (13.68%) clicked the link to the online enrollment form. This was 6.58 points (32.49%) 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 22.43, 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 Child Support Services" than "Getting Started with Child Support Services."

ANALYSIS

While we do not have data on why visitors clicked some variants less than others, the lower click-through rates of all variants further suggest our hypothesis may be correct and that the terms "IV-D," "Prosecutor," "DCS" may be confusing and/or have negative associations. "CSB" had a lower click-through rate too which went against our hypothesis that this term would be beneficial. Even with "Child Support" adding context, all the variants performed significantly worse than the control. As shown in Figure 4, the daily comparison of variant click-through rates shows a consistent trend over the 90-day intervention. Based on these findings, the team continues to infer that wording of content does have an impact on the actions of visitors to the Child Support webpage. The team also recommends that terms such as "IV-D," "Prosecutor," "DCS" and "CSB" be removed from website content and all outreach materials to eliminate any potential negative impact on program participation. Based on these results, the best way to refer to the program is simply as the Child Support program or the Indiana Child Support program.

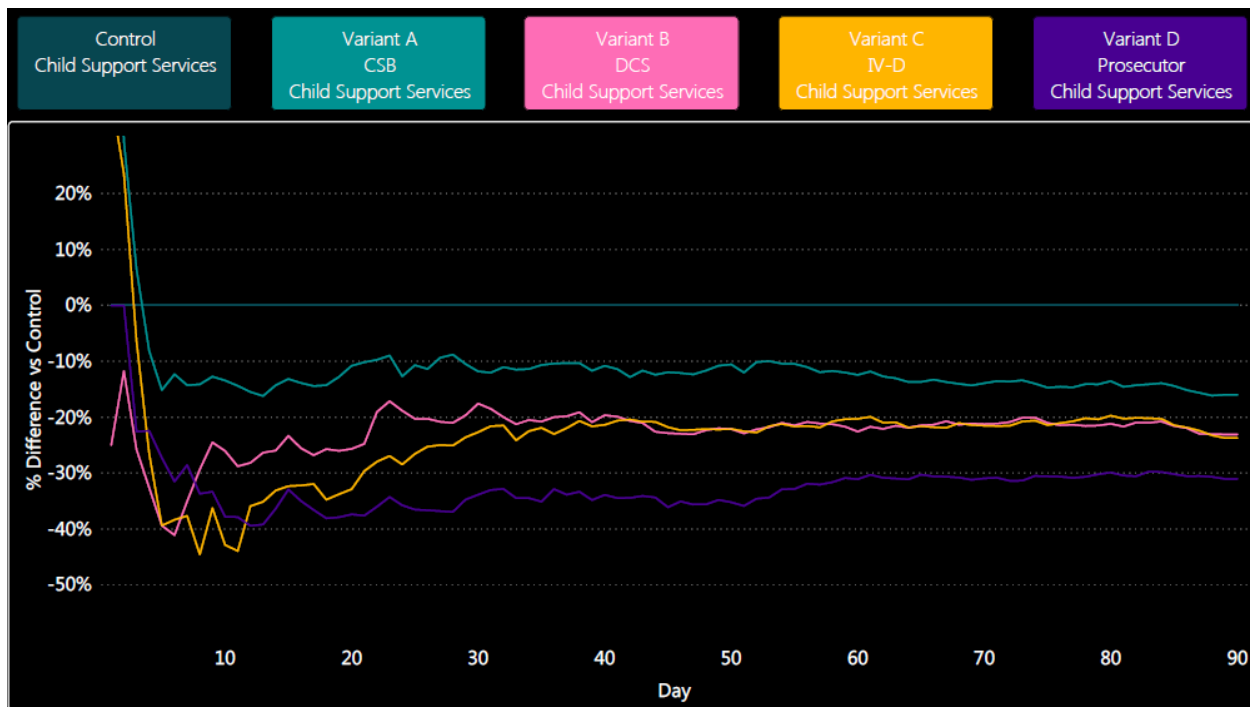| Control Child Support Services | Variant A CSB Child Support Services | Variant B DCS Child Support Services | Variant C IV-D Child Support Services | Variant D Prosecutor Child Support Services |

Figure 4

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Our biggest takeaway from this intervention is that agency-specific or technical terms are 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. The team recommends further research and testing into other similar terms that may have impact on program participation. Terms such as "Need" vs "Want" should be examined to determine how they affect potential participants and existing participants' decisions and engagement with the program.

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

Google Analytics 360 is an integrated data-and-marketing analysis product that analyzes consumer behavior and interactions with digital properties.

GOOGLE OPTIMIZE

Google Optimize is 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/)