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 6: CHAT

EVALUATION REPORT

SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

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BACKGROUND:

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 6: CHAT

Based on surveys, focus groups, expert recommendations, and feedback from our outreach team acquired during the planning phase, we believed that the lack of modern engagement tools would negatively impact participation in the child support program. Intervention 6 tested potential solutions by implementing a small-scale chat bot tool and measuring how this tool impacts the behavior of potential participants towards enrollment.

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 and conducted surveys and focus groups to analyze and suggest modern engagement capabilities that would promote a positive user experience to fuel increased participation in the program. Our team believed that a chat bot tool might encourage greater program participation.

After soliciting quotes from Indiana's Office of Technology (IOT) and two software vendors, the team engaged SeeITFirst to create a custom developed chat bot using Outsystems and Microsoft's Bot Framework. This vendor was selected based on low cost and quick development using a modern low-code platform. Per the team's requirements, the chat bot was simplistic with minimal dialogs but capable of guiding users through a short, scripted conversation to acquire contact information that our Outreach team could use to follow up with potential participants to encourage them to enroll in the child support program (see Appendix B: Chat Bot Design).

INTERVENTION 6: CHAT

Intervention 6 focused on testing whether a chat solution available to visitors to Indiana's child support website has a positive impact on participation and to determine the impact of a chat bot on engagement. The team, through a series of collaborative discussions held over three months, brainstormed road tests for the intervention. During these collaborative discussions, we selected two independent road tests that tested the impact of a chat bot on behavior of visitors to our website.

ROAD TEST 20 & 21 – CHAT BOT

After receiving the chat bot from our development vendor, we worked with our agency's internal webmasters to add a button for the chat bot to our website. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 there were policy changes at IOT that restricted our internal agency's webmasters capabilities to deploy new tools. Before COVID-19, the policy allowed the DCS webmaster to install code on the DCS controlled websites (with CSB's website being one of them), but the policy now restricts department webmasters from installing code and only IOT can do so. This forced the team to engage IOT and request the chat bot code deployment to our website. However, due to IOT's increased workload caused by COVID-19, the timeline for deployment of the chat bot was not compatible with the digital marketing grant timelines. Therefore, a decision was made on August 7, 2020 to cancel intervention 6, which was originally scheduled to be 90-days, starting on June 1, 2020 and ending on August 29, 2020.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

CHAT

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

CHAT BOT

A software application used to conduct an on-line chat conversation instead of providing direct contact with a person.

DIGITAL MARKETING

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

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/)

Perspective Participant	Care Bot

Care Bot Initiated

Request First Name
Hi, this is Care Bot. May I have your first name?

Input Mask: "First Name"
Max Length: 25

Submit First Name

Store First Name

Offer Assist w/ Enrollment
Hi, [first_name]. May I assist you in getting started with Child Support?

Input Mask: "Yes/No"
Max Length: 3

Submit Response to Assist Offer

Assist Offer Response?

All Other Responses

Yes

Request Preferred Contact Method
Our team is here to help! For your convenience, how may we contact you? By email, text, or over the phone?

Input Mask: "Email/Text/Phone"
Max Length: 5

Submit Preferred Contact Method

Store Preferred Contact Method

Please provide your email address.

Request Email Address

Email

Please provide your cell phone number.
*** Text charges may apply.

Request Mobile Phone Number

Text

Preferred Contact Method?

Please provide your telephone number.
*** Phone charges may apply.

Request Phone Number

Phone

Input Mask: "##########"
Max Length: 10

Submit Phone Number

Store Phone Number

Input Mask: "##########"
Max Length: 10

Submit Mobile Phone Number

Store Mobile Phone Number

Input Mask: "abc@email.com"
Max Length: 50

Submit Email Address

Store Email Address

Thank you for your information. A member of our Care team will email you at the address provided. We look forward to talking with you.

Farewell Email

Thank you for your information. A member of our Care team will text you at the number provided. We look forward to talking with you.

Farewell Text

Thank you for your information. A member of our Care team will call you at the number provided. We look forward to talking with you.

Farewell Phone

If you would like further assistance please contact our Customer Service Center (KIDSLINE) at 1 (800) 840-8757.

Farewell Customer Service

Care Bot Terminated