Reaching the Unassisted
Digital Outreach to Non-TANF Prospects

Final Brief

CALIFORNIA
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

GOAL:
To increase non-TANF child support enrollments

INTERVENTIONS:
Social Media, Display, and Search advertising;
Expert led webinars to solicit new customer data

COUNTIES ENGAGED:
Del Norte, Merced, Imperial

MARKETING CONSULTANT:
Ogilvy

EVALUATION PARTNER:
Media Solutions

KEY FINDINGS

- Search advertising was the highest performer throughout the grant program

- Ads received unexpected engagement from male-focused websites

- The Spanish-speaking community was highly engaged with all digital content

- Influencer marketing proved to be successful among a hard-to-reach population

- Identified two distinct outreach targets – current case participants and prospective case participants

- Lack of trust in government negatively impacted information-gathering attempts

1 Del Norte

PARTICIPATING COUNTIES

Merced

2

California Child Support Services
selected three counties to participate
in the grant program based on the low percentages
of "never assisted" cases in their caseload* compared
with the "single parent" population of those counties as
reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 American
Community Survey. The three counties represented Northern,
Southern, and Central California, and included large Spanish-speaking
and Native American populations. The participating counties included:
1) Del Norte, 2) Merced, and 3) Imperial.

* per federal fiscal year 2017 performance data

Imperial

3

OVERVIEW

The Digital Media Marketing Grant, 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, was a 36-month* demonstration project with the goal of researching how digital media marketing may help the child support program more effectively reach and serve parents. 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.

*Originally, this was a 24-month demonstration project. Due to COVID-19, OCSE extended the funding for an additional 12-months.

APPROACH

California Child Support Services started by testing three messages in three different creative applications to get a sense of what might earn a response from target audiences. Content drew on topics believed to be of interest to parents that would increase awareness about services offered and could ultimately inspire potential customers to open a case. California's grant team utilized the Learn-Innovate-Improve model to evaluate each intervention to update ad messages and platform use to inspire more engagement and action from the audience. The grant team took a new approach in the third intervention and developed webinars led by Child Support Specialists to collect data from registrants during surveys to potentially identify important topics during live question and answer sessions to inform updated outreach.

INTERVENTIONS

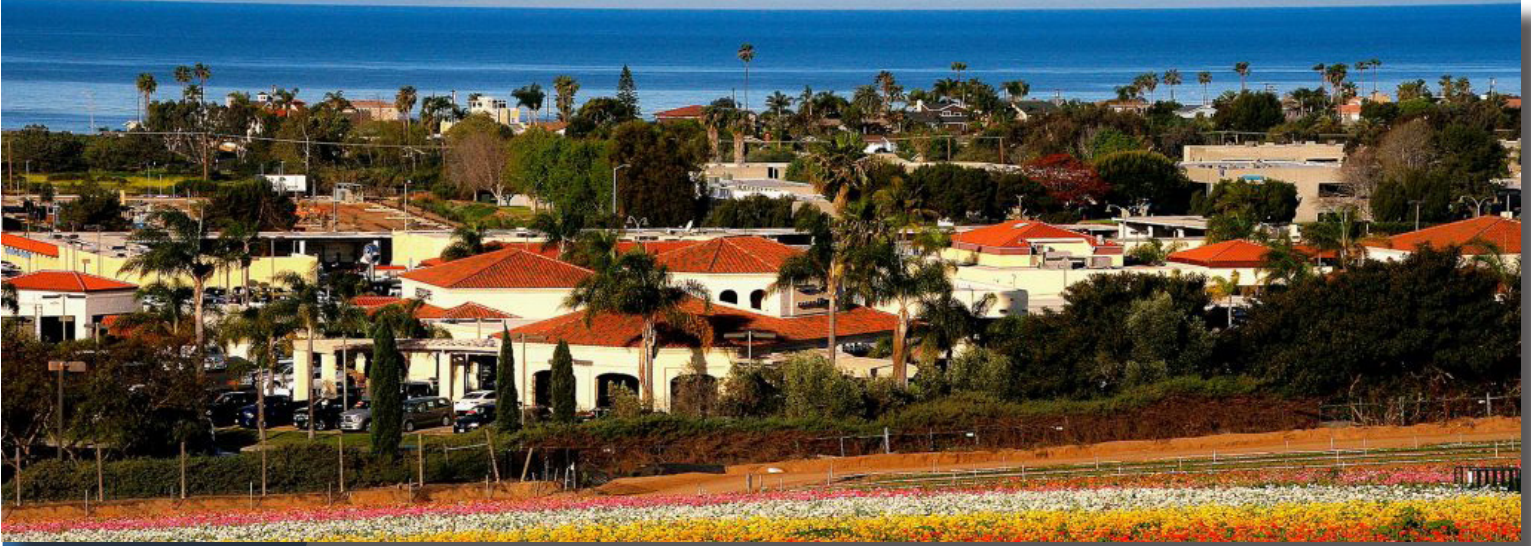### INTERVENTION 1: Raising Awareness
August 19 – October 13, 2019

GOAL: Raise awareness of child support services among single parents unlikely to be referred by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

TACTIC: Tested three messages and three creative applications across Social Media, Display, and Search advertising platforms.

- **Impressions** 4,771,459

- **Total Clicks** 29,031

- **Click-Through Rate by platform**
  - **Display** 0.28%
  - **Search** 5.55%
  - **Social Media** 1.70%
  - **LinkedIn** 0.60%

- **Cost Per 1,000 Impressions** $6.91

- **Cost Per Click** $1.13

- **Call Center Reports -5.51%** *(over prior year, same dates)*

- **New Enrollments -58.59%** *(over prior year, same dates)*

GOAL: To inspire action among eligible targets, male and female, and test both contextual and behavioral targeting. Explore the use of influencer marketing to spread child support messaging to a hard-to-reach audience.

TACTIC: Updated messages to include sports visuals targeted to fathers/men based on findings from the first intervention.

- **Impressions** 3,712,482

- **Total Clicks** 29,031

- **Click-Through Rate by platform**
    - **Display** 0.59%
    - **Search** 9.29%
    - **Social Media** 1.37%
    - **LinkedIn** 0.39%
    - **Pre-Roll Video** 0.23%

- **Cost Per 1,000 Impressions** $10.51

- **Cost Per Click** $1.99

- **Call Center Reports -10.54%** *(over prior year, same dates)*

- **New Enrollments -65.93%** *(over prior year, same dates)*

INTERVENTION 3: Collecting Market Research
February 1-21, 2021

GOAL: To determine if degital advertising can be used to solicit participants for low-cost market research to discover messages that stimulate action among the target audience.

TACTIC: Developed webinars led by Child Support Specialists to collect data from registrants using surveys and identify important topics during live question and answer sessions to inform future outreach.

- **Impressions** 2,407,305

- **Total Clicks** 15,431

- **Click-Through Rate by platform**
    - o **Display** 0.61%
    - o **Search** 3.84%
    - o **Social Media** 0.60%
    - o **LinkedIn** 0.60%

- **Cost Per 1,000 Impressions** $12.33

- **Cost Per Click** $2.37

- **Call Center Reports -16.73%** *(over prior year, same dates)*

- **New Enrollments -22.58%** *(over prior year, same dates)*

OUTCOMES

Responses

All three interventions had strong engagement from the target audience but case openings and call center contact continued to decline. Although the audience was interested in the content, there was no change in behavior.

CREATIVE CONTENT

All ad iterations across the three interventions performed similarly. Not one ad image or ad message monopolized the audience. The California grant team saw slight response variations among the three counties but no strong pull to identify a truly resonant message with this audience, despite the dissemination
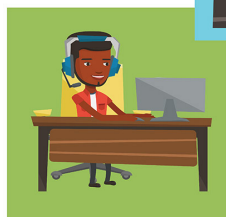

MAKE A GAME PLAN WITH THE PROS

FREE Webinar

GET THE FACTS

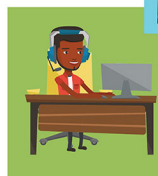TALK TO EXPERTS

CONOCE LOS HECHOS

GRATIS • TALLER EN LÍNEA SOBRE CHILD SUPPORT BÁSICO

HABLA CON LOS EXPERTOS

WEBSITE ACTIVITY

During all three Learning Cycles, the California grant team created unique website landing pages, in English and Spanish, to track ad clicks and gauge customer interest. The landing pages were hidden to the general public and could only be accessed by clicking through the ads during each Cycle. Overall, interest was robust for the challenging topic but throughout the grant, although people were navigating to the web pages, they were not "making the conversion" and opening a child support case.

The decline in Landing Page activity during each Learning Cycle was due to the shift in desired activity within each Cycle. The goal of Learning Cycle 1 was to raise awareness of the topic and direct viewers to the the website, whereas the goal of Cycle 2 was engagement with video ads, *not* to drive people to the landing pages.

The goal in Cycle 3 shifted again to encourage webinar sign-ups - which deterred people from clicking through to the landing pages perhaps because they were either not interested in attending a webinar or because they were unwilling to provide personal information to register.

It is also important to note that malicious "bot" traffic during Learning Cycle 1 resulted in artificially high activity during that intervention as well, causing "false" sessions to be counted, particularly in Spanish.

LANDING PAGE ACTIVITY

	Learning Cycle 1 (sessions)	Learning Cycle 2 (sessions)	Learning Cycle 3 (sessions)
English Landing Page	28,754	9,027	5,862
Spanish Landing Page	45,813	7,919	8,224
Total Landing Page Activity	74,567	16,946	14,086

KEY LEARNINGS:

Everything must be mobile friendly. Over 75% of engagement came from mobile devices and California sees similar data on the state Child Support Services website year-round. From ads, images, and videos to website pages, informational flyers, and enrollment forms, consumers are on mobile devices and it's important that they are accommodated there.

Information in Spanish is in high demand. As shown during each of the Learning Cycles, engagement with Spanish content was very high, often even higher than the English content. The Spanish-speaking population in California is interested in child support information and it's a market that deserves targeted engagement and specific support.

As a program there is not enough knowledge as to why our target audience does not use our services. Without this understanding, we cannot create messaging that will resonate with them, address their concerns, and stimulate action. Repeatedly it was proven there is interest, but the messaging (based on internal opinions about what a customer would consider a benefit) did not result in new case openings. In fact, new child support enrollments throughout the state declined over 30% from 2018 levels regardless of the three Learning Cycles.

Through California's experience, as well as witnessing the successes and challenges of other grantees, **the conclusion must be made that advertising alone will not be sufficient to change potential customer behaviors and generate new enrollments.** The only deliverable that stimulated a significant number of new case openings was a change in procedure: conversion to a simpler application form that can be accessed and easily completed from a mobile phone, as supported by Minnesota's and Virginia's learning cycles.

COVID-19 ADJUSTMENTS:

The third intervention was originally scheduled for August through October 2020, but was delayed to January 2021 due to the public distraction related to COVID-19, the competition for ad time created by a contentious presidential election, and possible delays on the part of parents still in relationships who were unwilling to separate during the pandemic due to financial concerns, job loss, and/or family healthcare needs. Although COVID-19 was still a concern in January 2021, all digital outreach metrics had subsided to measures closer to normal traffic and it was determined that a new cycle of messaging would no longer compete with the ongoing news cycle.

More Information:

California Child Support's digital marketing project's evaluation reports are available to provide more in-depth information.

Click on the items below or visit
childsupport.ca.gov/grants

Evaluation Reports:

- Learning Cycle 1
- Learning Cycle 2
- Learning Cycle 3

CALIFORNIA
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES