

# Virginia Digital Engagement Project

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Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation  
in the Child Support Program

*HHS-2018-ACF-OCSE-FD-1368*

*Awarded 10/22/2018*

**DCSE** Division of Child  
Support Enforcement

**supportVAkids** 

# Background

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, was 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/or to create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents.

These Section 1115 grants for the Digital Marketing project were awarded to 12 state and 2 tribal child support agencies in California, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Colorado, Indiana, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Indians of Wisconsin, Michigan, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming.



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

Office of Child Support Enforcement | 330 C Street, S.W., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20201 | [www.acf.hhs.gov/css](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/css)

# Project (and On-Going) Goals

- **Increase applications** from parents who are eligible for child support services but not currently connected to the IV-D program (“Never Assistance” cases)

- **Test a wide range** of potential digital engagement methods and platforms

- Build on those tests to **develop a sustainable digital outreach strategy** that can serve multiple purposes





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# Our Strategy

## A Cyclic Approach





# Cycle 1

## “Find”

6/10/19 – 9/9/19




### Determine Target Location

- Looked for trends in new “Never Assistance” cases
- Wedded those to American Community Survey (ACS) data
- Scored and mapped factors
- Focused on 23 areas, outlined in blue

#### Digital Marketing Grant: Targeted Ad Locations with Extended Focus Areas

Virginia Localities with Above Average Prevalence:  
Index Scores from Combined Measures of Interest

##### Legend

 Target Localities, including Surrounding Areas


 DCSE District Office

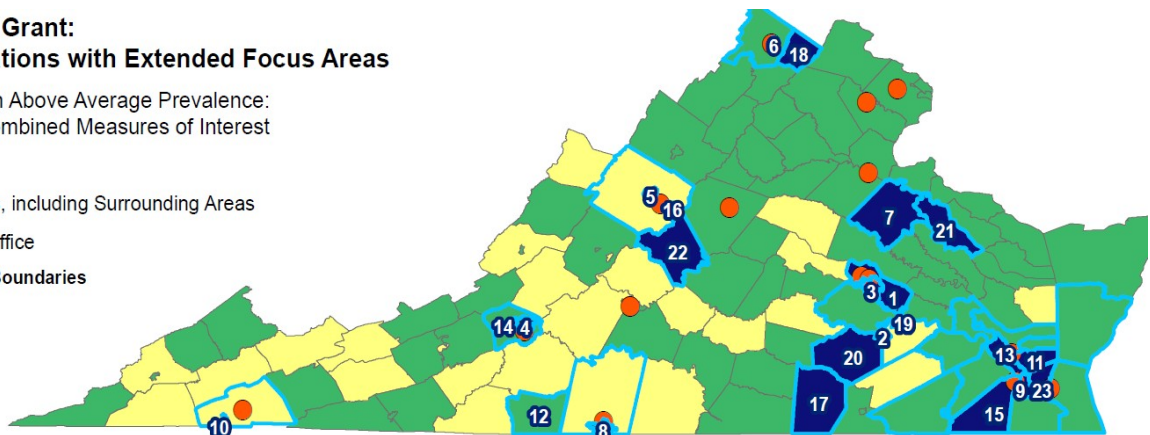
Virginia County & City Boundaries

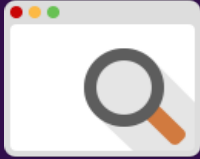
Total Index Score

 3 Points or Less

 3.5 to 6.5 Points

 7 to 8.5 Points





## Employ Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Website Updates

- Fix missing HTTPS links
- Make WWW vs. non-WWW consistent
- Additional SEO Recommendations in “Best Practices for Your Digital Marketing Strategy”

Original

EVERY CHILD NEEDS SUPPORT

Virginia's children need both financial and family support to grow and thrive. Children with actively involved parents perform better in school, have high self-esteem, and generally achieve greater success in life.

The Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) is committed to helping parents support their children by focusing on more than just money. DCSE offers engagement services focusing on access and visitation, responsible parenting, employment assistance, and prisoner reentry.

 Apply for <b>child support</b>	 Make a <b>payment</b>	 Find my <b>district office</b>	 Lower my <b>TANF debt</b>
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Updated

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The Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE) is committed to helping parents support their children by focusing on more than just money. DCSE offers engagement services focusing on access and visitation, responsible parenting, employment services and prisoner reentry.

We strive to support parents who are receiving support and parents who are paying support.

 Parents who <b>receive support</b>	 Make a <b>payment online</b>	 Establish <b>paternity</b> in Virginia	 Parents who <b>pay support</b>
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## New Campaign Webpage

- Users directed to new contact form
- Assisted in tracking user interactivity

Virginia Department of Social Services Commonwealth of Virginia

# Making Virginia's Child Support Program Simpler

An Easier Application, Low-cost Paternity Testing, and Help for Both Dads and Moms

As Virginia's **Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE)**, we know the child support program can be hard to navigate. We have **district offices across the state** to support our families, make it easier to receive and pay child support, and even offer low-cost paternity testing.

We're making changes to improve how we serve families like yours...

Your child's needs just can't wait!

[Reach out to us today!](#)

We'll respond within two business days.

More Services for Custodial Parents (Parents Wanting to Receive Child Support)	Easy, Low-cost Paternity Testing	Support Services for Dads and Moms
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. NEW 1-page child support application</li><li>2. Customer service experts trained to walk you through the process</li><li>3. Only \$35 annually (and only if we collect more than \$550/year on that child support case)</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Costs less than \$30 per person</li><li>2. Simple, confidential testing in our office with certified genetic testing experts</li><li>3. Fast results - usually in under 3 weeks</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Help the paying parent with some job-related expenses (work boots, uniforms, training, transportation, etc.)</li><li>2. Convenient ways to make child support payments</li><li>3. Free parenting and co-parenting programs</li></ol>
<b>Don't lose out</b> on the money your child needs!	<b>Don't waste money</b> on expensive testing!	<b>Don't delay</b> building your child's potential!





## New Contact Form

- Focus on simplicity
- Approachable language

**Full Name** Required

First Name  Last Name

**Phone Number** Required

**What can we do for you?** Required

Open a case for you and your child with the Virginia Department of Social Services

Help you with an existing child support case

Tell you about family engagement services (co-parenting, mediation, visitation, and more!)

Connect you or someone you know to employment services

**Email (optional)**

**Address (optional)**

Street Address  Apt / Suite

Address 2

City  State  Zip / Postal

**How do you want us to contact you? (optional)**

Phone (voice)

Email



Google Ads

## Google Search Ads

### Three Ad Groups

- Applications
  - Primary audience: custodial parties
- Family Engagement
  - Primary audience: noncustodial parents
- Paternity
  - Primary audience: mothers and fathers

### Two Ads per Group

- Allowed for A/B Testing
- Ad copy combined concepts from behavioral economics and SEO keywords

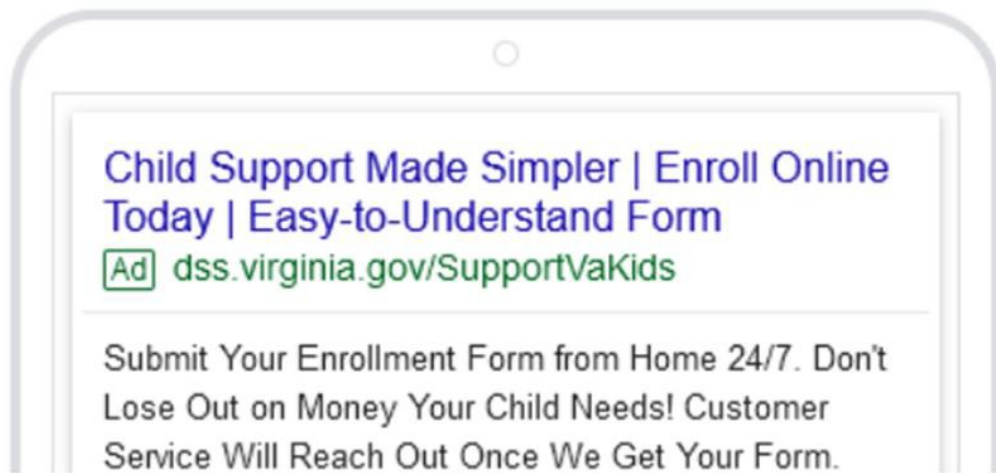


# Google Search Ad Examples

## Applications



Ad	Impressions	Conversions ▼	CTR ▼
● Enabled	18,016	234.00	15.92%



Ad	Impressions	Conversions ▼	CTR ▼
● Enabled	244	2.00	25.82%



# Paternity



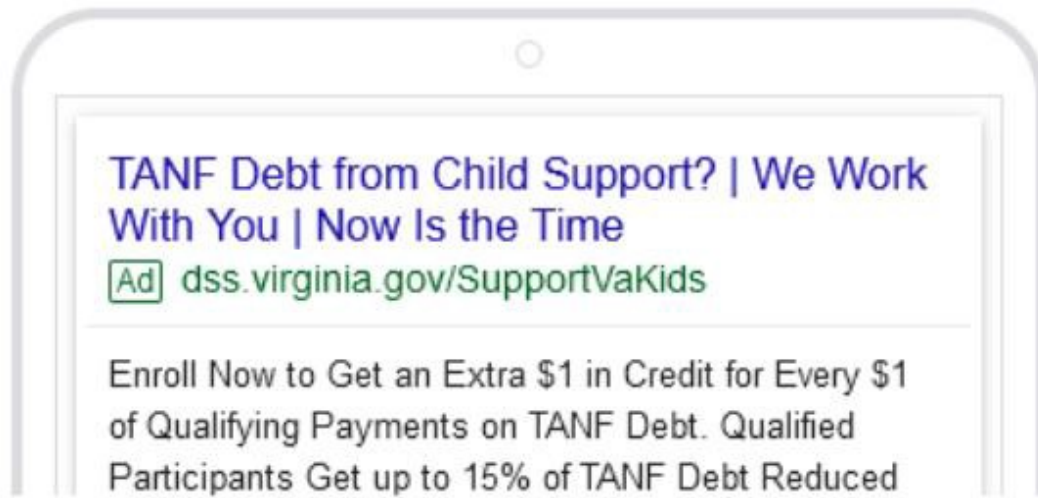
Ad	Impressions	Conversions ▾	CTR ▾
● Enabled	12,918	41.00	6.07%

# Review and Adjustment



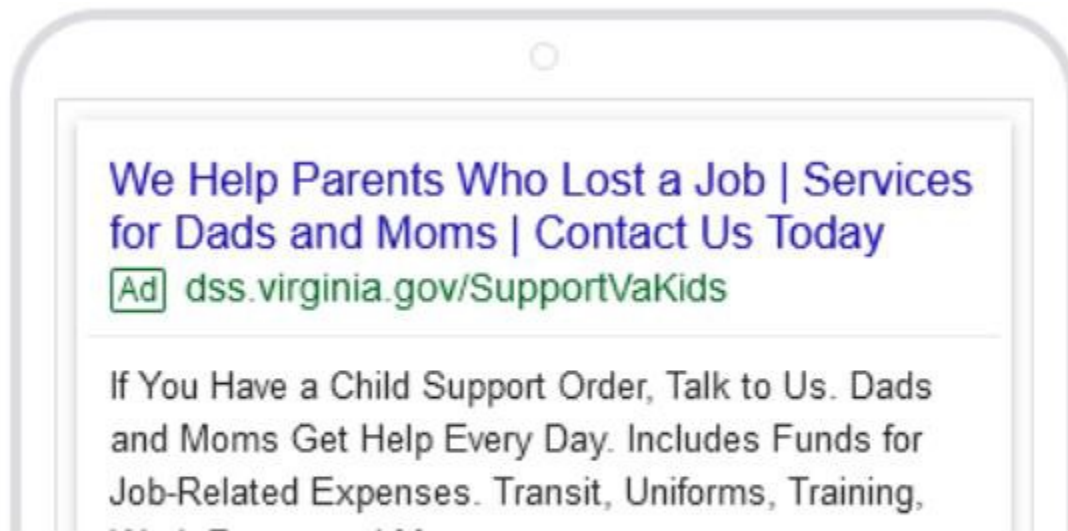
Ad	Impressions	Conversions ▾	CTR ▾
● Enabled	34,098	207.00	7.28%

## Debt Compromise



Ad	Impressions	Conversions ▼	CTR ▼
● Enabled	4,310	27.00	6.91%

## Employment Services



Ad	Impressions	Clicks ▼	CTR ▼
● Enabled	318	6	1.89%



# Google Display Ad Examples



## Get Child Support Online

No Fee for New Applicants. Easy Online Form. Enroll Today



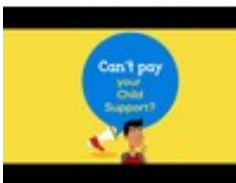
## Get Child Support Online

No Fee for New Applicants. Easy Online Form. Enroll Today



## Can't Pay Your Child Support?

We Review and Adjust Child Support Orders Every Day. Either Parent Can Request Our Service



## Child Support Orders Do Change

Many Child Support Orders Can Be Changed Without Court. We Have Ways to Submit Remotely





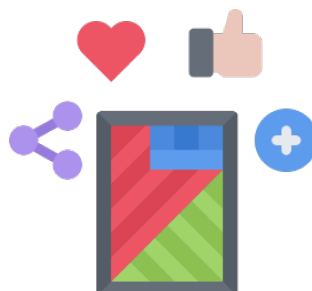
# Cycle 2 “Engage”

11/1/19 – 1/29/20



Child support-focused accounts on social media:

- “Organic” content posted, twice weekly
  - Urged users to apply for child support, promoted the new online child support application, highlighted paternity and family engagement services, and encouraged people to follow and “like” its posts.
- Paid advertising posted roughly every two weeks
  - Two with still photos, two with video, each in horizontal and vertical configurations





## Hashtag Campaign #supportVAkids

- Encouraged other users to share positive content related to child support in Virginia
- Intended to get users to think beyond any preconceived ideas about the child support program
- Every post made across both the organic and paid campaigns used the hashtag

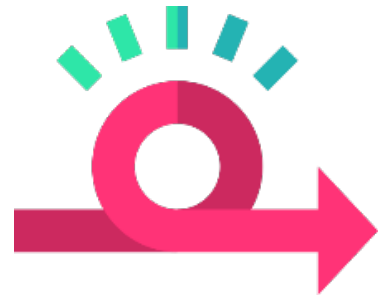
supportVAkids



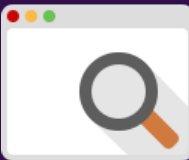
## New Online Child Support Application

- Hosted on new web portal created in Cycle 1
- Utilized same image from new web portal to create consistent branding
- Clear, approachable language, and a focus on simplicity exemplifies user-centered design also present in the revamped contact form and ad language from Cycle 1

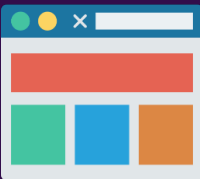
*While continuing the following strategies from Cycle 1:*



Geographic Targeting



SEO



Continued Integration of Our New Campaign Webpage



Utilizing Our New Contact Form



# Cycle 3

## “Educate”

5/1/20 – 7/30/20

Expanded Social Media Advertising



- Expanded audiences to include professional (LinkedIn), semi-professional (YouTube), and youth (Snapchat)
- New platforms included strictly paid advertising content
- Also maintained targeted Google Advertising



Google Ads



## Educational Podcasts

- Focused on dispelling common child support myths
- Interviewed child support staff for front-line perspectives
- Distributed on all major podcast platforms



## Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Webinar

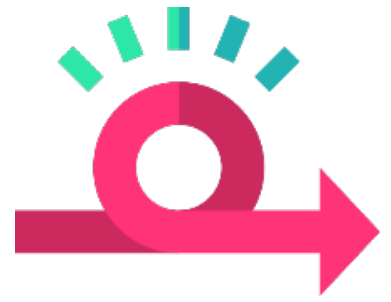
- Intended for family law attorneys and mediators
- Utilized legal partnership for content development and presentation
- Presented common myths and detailed administrative overviews of the child support case life cycle



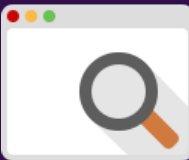
## How-to Video Series

- Focused on filling out our new child support application (both online and shorter print version)

# *While continuing the following strategies from Cycle 1*



Geographic Targeting



SEO



Continued Integration of Our New  
Campaign Webpage



Utilizing Our New Contact Form

# Our Successes



# By The Numbers

**Primary Goal:**  
Increase Applications from  
“Never Assistance” Cases

**22.49% Increase in Cycle 3**

**Primary Goal:**  
Develop a sustainable  
digital outreach strategy

11/1/19 – 07/30/20

Facebook +460 Followers

Instagram +885 Followers

Twitter +124 Followers

LinkedIn +50 Followers

YouTube +110 Subscribers





**Secondary Goal:**  
Increase Paternity Establishment

Paternity Establishment outpaced  
New Orders **for the first time**  
during targeted marketing periods.



**Secondary Goal:**  
Increase Contact Form Submissions

**Four times** as many contact forms  
submitted within  
geographic ad-targeted area.

**4x**

## Secondary Goal: Steward Grant Funds Efficiently to Produce Most Cost-Effective Impact

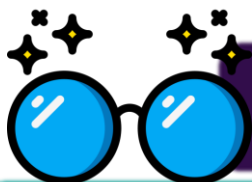


Category	Average Cost per Conversion*: SEO for Google Search	Average Cost per Conversion: SEO + Google DisplayAds
Applications	\$17.65	\$40.20
Debt Compromise	\$16.88	\$22.01
Review & Adjustment	\$18.31	\$19.10
Industry Benchmark**	\$48.96	\$75.51

\* Conversion: The moment when you get your audience to perform an action

\*\*Source: Wordstream

(<https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2016/02/29/google-adwords-industry-benchmarks>)



## Total ads in front of eyes

Google Search, Display, and YouTube

Facebook

Total

$$11,991,038 + 2,142,396 = \underline{14,133,434}$$

# Our Lessons Learned + Your Digital Marketing Strategy



## Americans are Online

- 81% of Americans “rely a lot on their own research”
- 46% of those people turn to digital tools first
- Google is the single most commonly named digital tool

\*Pew Research Center, survey conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 10, 2018



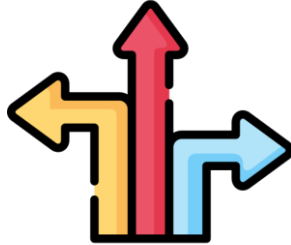
## Have a Digital Endpoint

- You need an end-product, such as an online application, contact form, webinar sign-up, etc.
- Remember to ensure mobile compatibility



## Be Specific with your Ads

- Where do you want your audience to go?
- What do you want your audience to do?



## Power in Platforms

- Facebook → large adult population
- Instagram → most social media users in all age groups
- Twitter → great for direct customer interaction
- Snapchat → Gen Z and younger
- YouTube → semi-professional
- LinkedIn → professional
- Leveraging cross-platforms can be successful
- Be wary of social media targeting reproducing gender bias





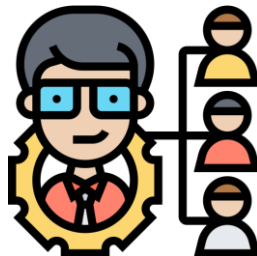
## Details Matter

- Leverage any and all partnerships (Marketing, Legal, Communications, etc.)
- Ensure you have some way to track conversions (Software or Google Analytics)
- Remember to exclude IP addresses of agency staff (everyone will want to see your work!)
- Double-check that you can detect click fraud



## Buy-in from the Top-Down

- Digital marketing can require heavy lifting in the beginning
- Make sure you have a commitment to being future-facing



# Best Practices for Your Digital Marketing Strategy



## Google Search: The Single Most Valuable Tool

- 1% of impressions across all 3 cycles  
Impressions are any instance of an ad appearing; it does not count clicks.
- 71% of total conversions
- 19% of budget

## How does Google Search work?

- User searches for something that contains a relevant key phrase  
Example: “child support advice”
- Ad served based on the budget and the amount of competition (an impression)
- You only pay if the user clicks the ad  
Amount determined by Google, with your input

# Remarketing

Search ads use clicks as their goal; remarketing ads typically use **conversions** as a goal.

What is remarketing? *Cookies.*



How does remarketing work?

**Step 1:** A user clicks on search ad or visits a website with tracking

**Step 2:** A cookie is placed on the user's browser to record the visit

**Step 3:** For 30 days, users with those cookies are served targeted display or social media ads

**Step 4:** User clicks on any of those targeted ads, and the user is directed to the intended website

**Step 5:** User performs the intended action (e.g. submits a contact form), remarketing ends

## Remarketing Budgeting

- Google Search – 62.5% of “best practices” budget of \$4,000/month
- Remaining balance split between Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google Display
- All remarketing, all targeted to conversions
- Spent \$3,600/month, achieved 1.6 million impressions, and 451 conversions (\$23.73/conversion)



## Use Video



- Half of US adults who use YouTube say the site is very important for “learning how to do things they haven’t done before”
  - For example: applying for child support, responding to a child support order
- Young people are more likely to rely on “recommended” videos
  - You will need views and the right optimization to have videos be “recommended”

\*Pew Research Center, survey conducted May 29-June 11, 2018



## Social Media is Valuable

- It’s a heavy lift, but parents are there and expect you to be there  
Have a policy in place for dealing with negative comments/misinformation

# Awards + Recognition



**NCSEA**  
Shaping the Future of Child Support

## Program Awareness Award

The National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) Program Awareness Award recognizes the effectiveness of media relations and public outreach in disseminating child support program information to the public. Despite an underserved population, Virginia Child Support experienced declining caseloads for several years. Through participation in the Digital Marketing to Increase Participation grant, Virginia DCSE used data to target specific markets and areas with digital and electronic advertising, social media and video ads. The results of the marketing initiative were substantive not online in increased applications but also in the number of impressions or when an ad is viewed by a member of the target market. A great deal of data was generated from the marketing program, including ad costs well below the industry average. Many general lessons came out as well, related to behaviorally informed messaging, cost-effective methods of digital outreach, and digital outreach for mobile users. Finally, organic social media is a long-term but fruitful investment in outreach and brand awareness. Overall, Virginia's program was recognized for its impactful results to the problem of declining caseloads, and its initiative of a complete campaign through several media and advertising platforms.



# Picture & Design Credit

**Special Thanks To:** David Ramm from Grays Peak Strategies for all information regarding Google Search and Display, SEO, remarketing, and conversion tracking.



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