USABILITY REPORT: PARENTS FORWARD

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INTRODUCTION

METHODS AND CONTEXT

We researched the usability of Parents Forwards's site, and made recommendations for improvements.

METHODOLOGY

	Gender	Parent?	Occupation
RP1	M	No	Case Manager
RP2	F	Yes	Artist
RP3	M	Yes	Social Worker
RP4	F	Soon	—
RP5	F	Yes	Bookkeeper
RP6	F	Yes	Office Manager
RP7	F	No	PhD Student
RP8	—	—	—
RP9	F	Yes	Social Worker
LP1	F	No	Designer
LP2	M	Soon	Designer
LP3	F	No	Designer
LP4	M	No	Designer

Usability Evaluation
- **We used predetermined criteria to evaluate the site for usability**

Remote and In-Lab Usability Testing
- **We interviewed 12 users while they used the site**
- **The main user tasks were tied to two scenarios**
  - **S1: Imagine you are a parent who works nights and has a court order requiring you to take parenting classes. Can you show me how you would find a class and register?**
  - **S2: Imagine you are a caseworker who is trying to find information for your client about available classes. Your client only speaks Spanish, lives in Bee Cave, and does not have a car. Can you find the classes that you think would meet their needs and send them information about those classes using the site in front of you?**

CONTEXTUALIZING THE FINDINGS

Helping parents find and register for parenting classes that fit their diverse needs is a worthy goal, and users had some great things to say about the site.

After using the site, RP5 said "I'm happier. I respect it. It's to the point. It's got what I need". RP3 expressed that he is "glad that this site exists, and that it's able to provide info.

Most of this report will focus on the negative findings from user research. We found a lot of negative findings, but I've offered recommendations that should address many of them. I hope these recommendations help you develop a more usable site.

PERSONABILITY

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

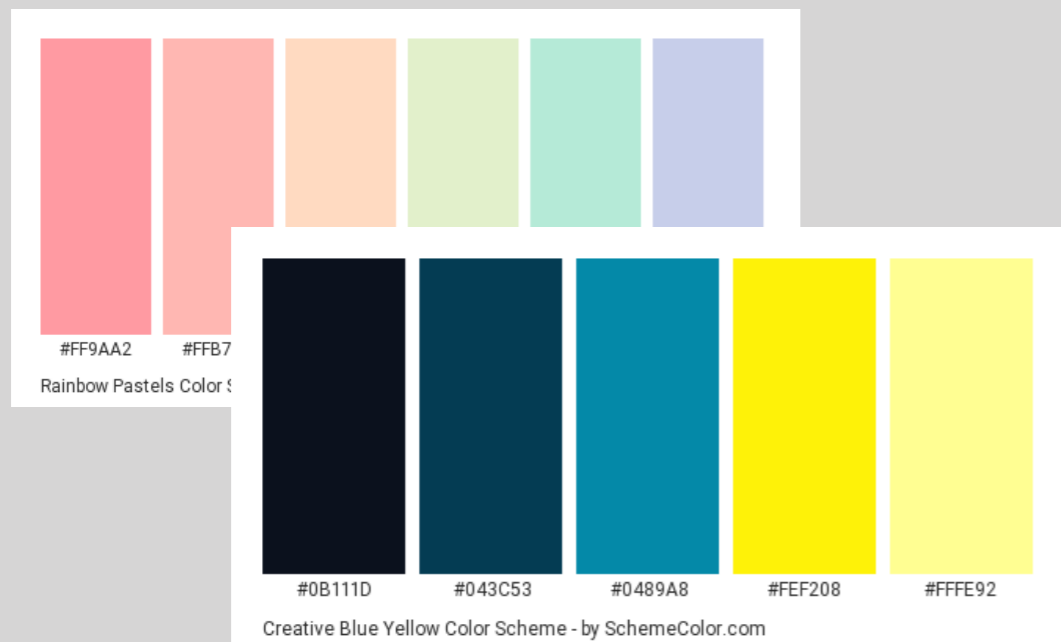*Users found the site dull and boring. They want it to feel human and welcoming.*

Recommendations:
1. Color - Replace the grey color scheme with a more colorful one
2. Visuals - Add photos of smiling people and babies
3. Descriptions - Add testimonials and instructor profiles to class descriptions
4. Tone - Lighten the tone of restrictive language

COLOR (PERSONABILITY 1)


Cold… Neutral… Uninspired -LP1
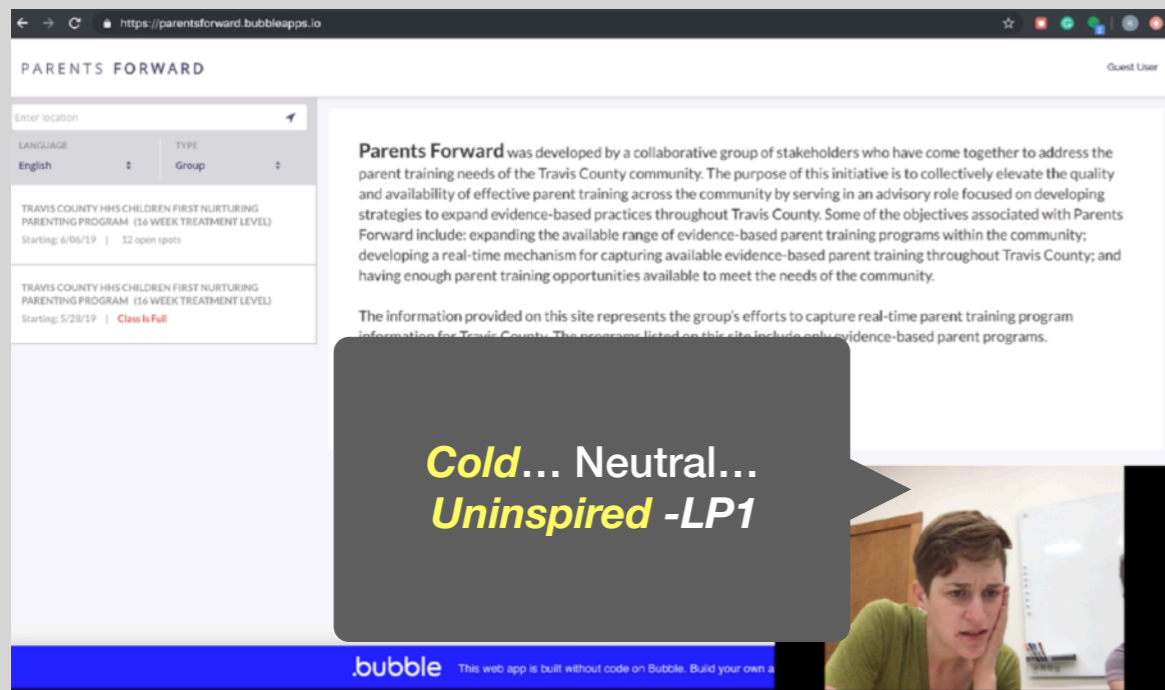
RECOMMENDATION: ADD SOME COLOR
- Users found the grey color scheme depressing, hostile, and boring.
- The lack of color also made the undesirable "bubble" banner stand out.
- Consider calm, responsible blues and happy, hopeful yellows.
- Alternatively, pastels fit the baby theme and can evoke calm feelings

#FF9AA2   #FFB7
Rainbow Pastels Color S

#0B111D   #043C53   #0489A8   #FEF208   #FFFE92
Creative Blue Yellow Color Scheme - by SchemeColor.com

It's boring… *It's so boring I don't even want to keep going in it* -RP5

VISUALS (PERSONABILITY 2)
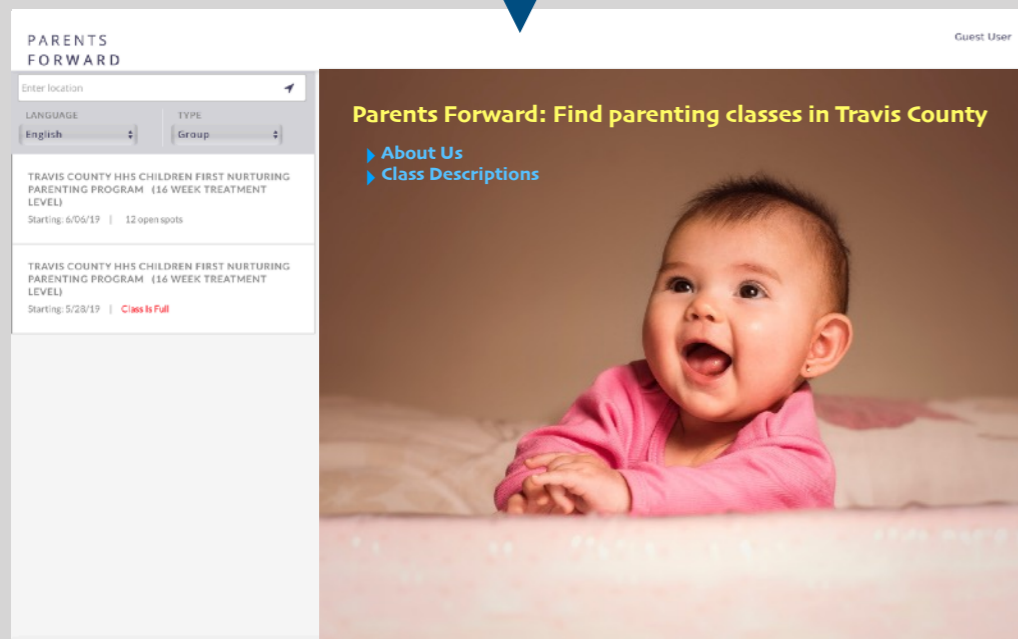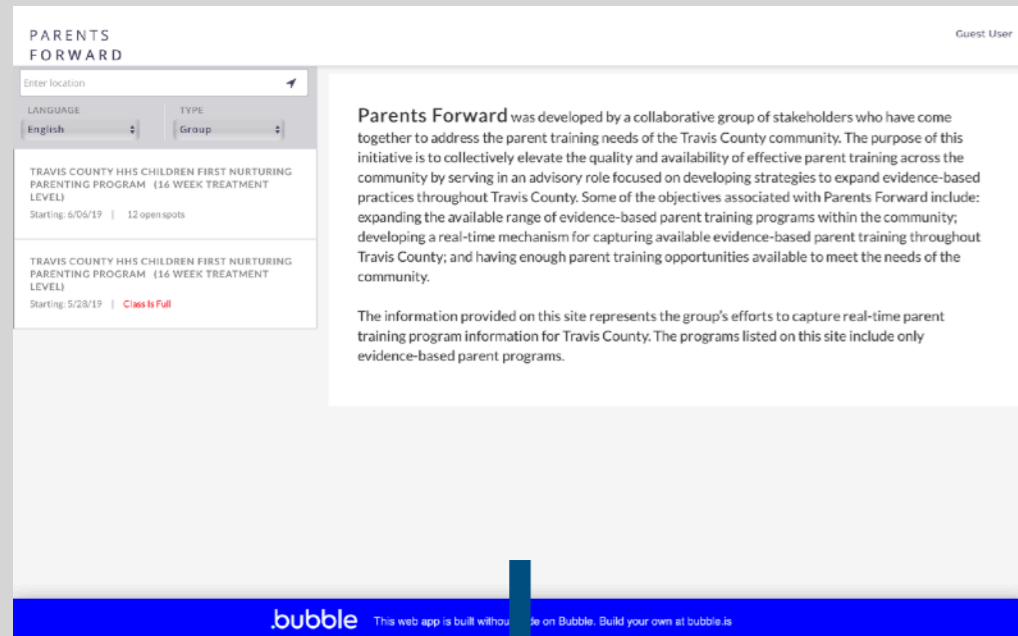
RECOMMENDATION: REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF TEXT AND INCORPORATE HAPPY PHOTOS AND VISUALS

- Users didn't want to read a paragraph of text to understand what the site was for
- Inviting visuals are especially important for the home page, but should be incorporated throughout
- Focus on people to make the site warm and personable

> It's not very inviting or anything, because *there aren't any photos, so it doesn't make me want to stay* on this page
> -RP4

DESCRIPTIONS (PERSONABILITY 3)

> As a person who is always very conscious of race and language, *I like to know who the facilitators are going to be*. Just because that also plays a factor. Is it a man? Is it a woman? Is it somebody who is white? Is it somebody who is black? Whatever, you name it. I think *it's important*, for me, *to know what to expect*.
> -RP3
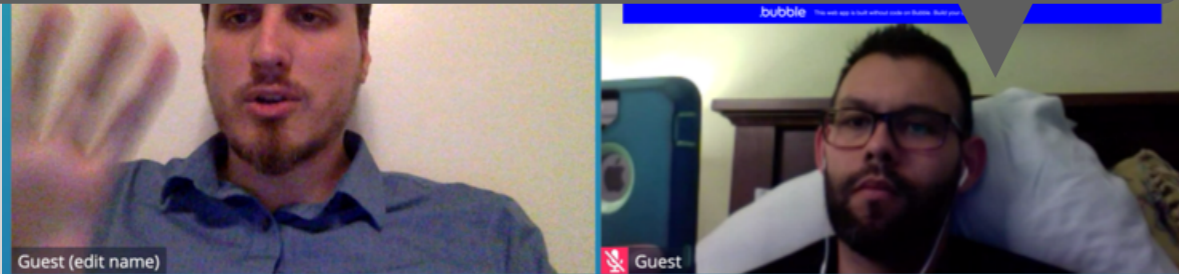
RECOMMENDATION: ADD TESTIMONIALS AND PHOTOS OF INSTRUCTORS TO COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

- These could be on a dedicated course comparison page (see p. 13) or on the existing course pages
- Basic information like frequently asked questions, reviews, and information about providers help users know what to expect

> *Testimonials* — ooh, that *would make me happy!*
> -RP6

TONE (PERSONABILITY 4)

This session's spoken language is **English**

Childcare is <u>NOT</u> available

↓

Language: English
 See side menu for Spanish and ASL classes
Childcare: Not available
 See side menu for In-Home classes

RECOMMENDATION: LIGHTEN THE TONE

- Bold, underlined, all-caps words can feel like yelling, and can be confused for links. Consider alternative ways to highlight information
- The constraints of the classes offered felt like dead-ends for users. Guiding users to alternative options without those constraints helps them find the information they need

> …*would be nice if it was a little bit lighter tone*, you know? Massage the words a little bit
> -RP6

FINDING CLASSES

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Users had a hard time finding the classes they needed

Recommendations:
1. Checkbox - Replace the dropdown menu with a checkbox menu
2. Comparison Page - Add a side-by-side comparison of classes
3. Transportation - Eliminate the search bar and map
4. Technical Bugs - Address bugs that reduce usability

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LANGUAGE
English

TYPE
Group

Language:
☑ English
☐ Spanish
☐ ASL

Type:
☑ Group
☑ In-Home
Compare classes

Availability:
☑ Open
☑ Full
About waitlists

Annotated, interactive prototype available at
https://9s13jz.axshare.com

RECOMMENDATION: REPLACE THE DROPBOX MENU WITH A CHECKBOX MENU
- Several users selected Spanish without selecting In-Home, saw nothing, and gave up
- A checkbox menu stands out more than an unselected dropdown menu and is more intuitive to use for those unfamiliar with technology
- A checkbox prominently displays its options and allows for multiple options to be selected at once

You don't know what the options are… What if I were not so tech-savvy? *[I wouldn't] know what those two arrows mean*
-RP3

COMPARISON PAGE (FINDING CLASSES 2)

DESCRIPTION

Strong Start is a comprehensive family support program for parents of children up to eleven years of age and younger who are experiencing extraordinary stress in their lives. We utilize the Nurturing Parenting curriculum.

ELEGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Parenting a child (0-11 yrs.) in Travis or Williamson County

DESCRIPTION

Offering fatherhood services for fathers of children (0-11 yrs) utilizing the Nurturing Fathers curriculum.

ELEGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Parenting a child (0-11 yrs.)in Travis or Williamson County

DESCRIPTION

Voluntary, strength-based home visiting program that provides services intended to enhance the abilities of parents/caregivers to protect their children from abuse/neglect. The program provides parental education to ensure independent and improved family functioning through home based services and by connecting the family to community resources.

ELEGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Families who have involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS). Family/Caregiver has an open CPS case with Travis County.

RECOMMENDATION: ADD A PAGE COMPARING THE VARIOUS CLASSES
- Link the to the page in the side menu and/or in class descriptions
- Define terms like "Group" and "In-Home"
- Being able to compare the classes side-by-side would help users understand how they differ and which one meets their needs

	Children First	Strong Start	Safe Futures
Type			
Eligibility			
Length			
Description			

The challenge… was figuring out which classes I needed to take
-LP2
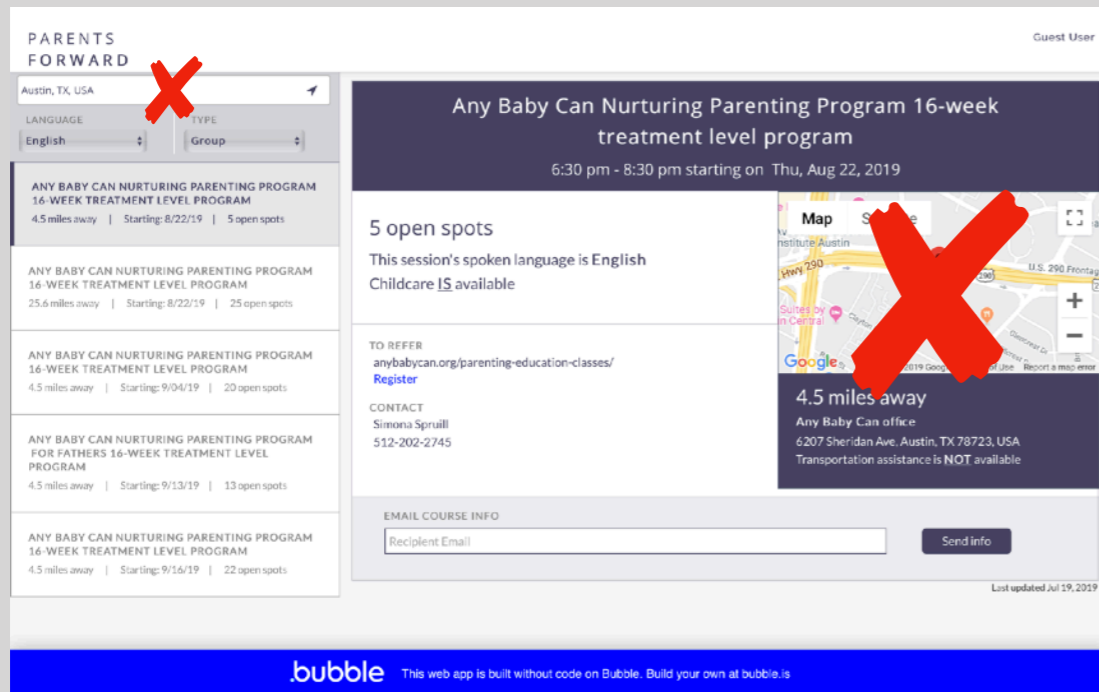
RECOMMENDATION: ELIMINATE THE SEARCH BAR AND MAP

- Travis County residents do not significantly benefit from a distance calculator for one or two locations
- The map could be replaced with links to directions, public transportation information, and a suggestion to check out In-Home classes if transportation is a problem. These pieces of information are more relevant to user needs based on our research
- Eliminating the map also makes room for personable visuals (see p. 8)

RP5 and LP4 *didn't notice a change after entering a location* in the search bar

RP1 pointed out that many of his *clients lack access to stable transportation*

RP1 *couldn't get the site to work on* their *iPad or cellphone* in Safari

Some people *don't have computers* -RP3

RECOMMENDATION: RESOLVE TECHNICAL BUGS

- We found iOS compatibility problems
- Content from previously viewed courses sometimes failed to clear. In some cases, this old content misled users and caused errors
- Changing the window size cause text to become obscured or choppy
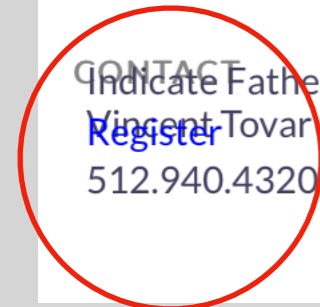
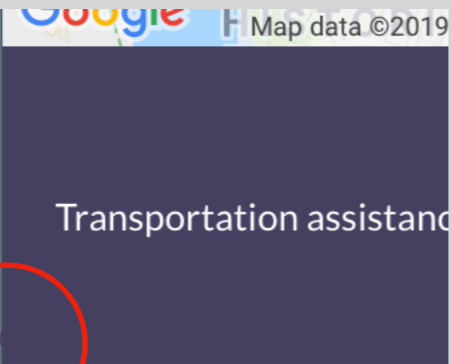LP1 had *trouble exiting* her *search*

TO REFER

https://www.safeaustin.org/strong-s

CONTACT
Indicate Fatherhood on referring ag
Vincent Tovar
Register
512.940.4320

TO REFER

Please have the CPS worker send all referrals to the Children First Referral Mailbox at ChildrenFirstReferrals@travisc

Register

Map data ©2019

Transportation assistanc

COUNTY

Unknown

REFERRAL

ORGANIZATION

The SAFE Alliance

DESCRIPTION

Strong Start is a comprehensive

REGISTRATION

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Users found the registration process confusing and frustrating

Recommendations:
1. Button - Make the register link more obvious
2. Link - Change the Children First registration link destination
3. Form - Open a registration form on the same page
4. Accessibility - Help Spanish speakers and parents without CPS workers register

BUTTON (REGISTRATION 1)

RECOMMENDATION: ADD AN OBVIOUS REGISTER BUTTON

- Registration is a major goal of the site, so it should be a prominent call to action
- A button with a shadow will stand out and be more obviously clickable than a hyperlink
- The button should not be hidden in the "To Refer" section

Strong Start (16 Week Nurturing Parenting)

0 open spots

This session's spoken language is **English, Spanish, ASL**
Availability of childcare is unknown

TO REFER
https://www.safeaustin.org/strong-start-referral-form/
Register
CONTACT
Vincent Tovar
(512) 940-4320

Transportation assistance is unknown

EMAIL THIS CASE INFO
Recipient email   Send info

Register

The *register button is small*, and I know it's hyperlinked in blue, but even as I'm tech savvy… I would prefer that it be bigger: 'register' in big, bold letters
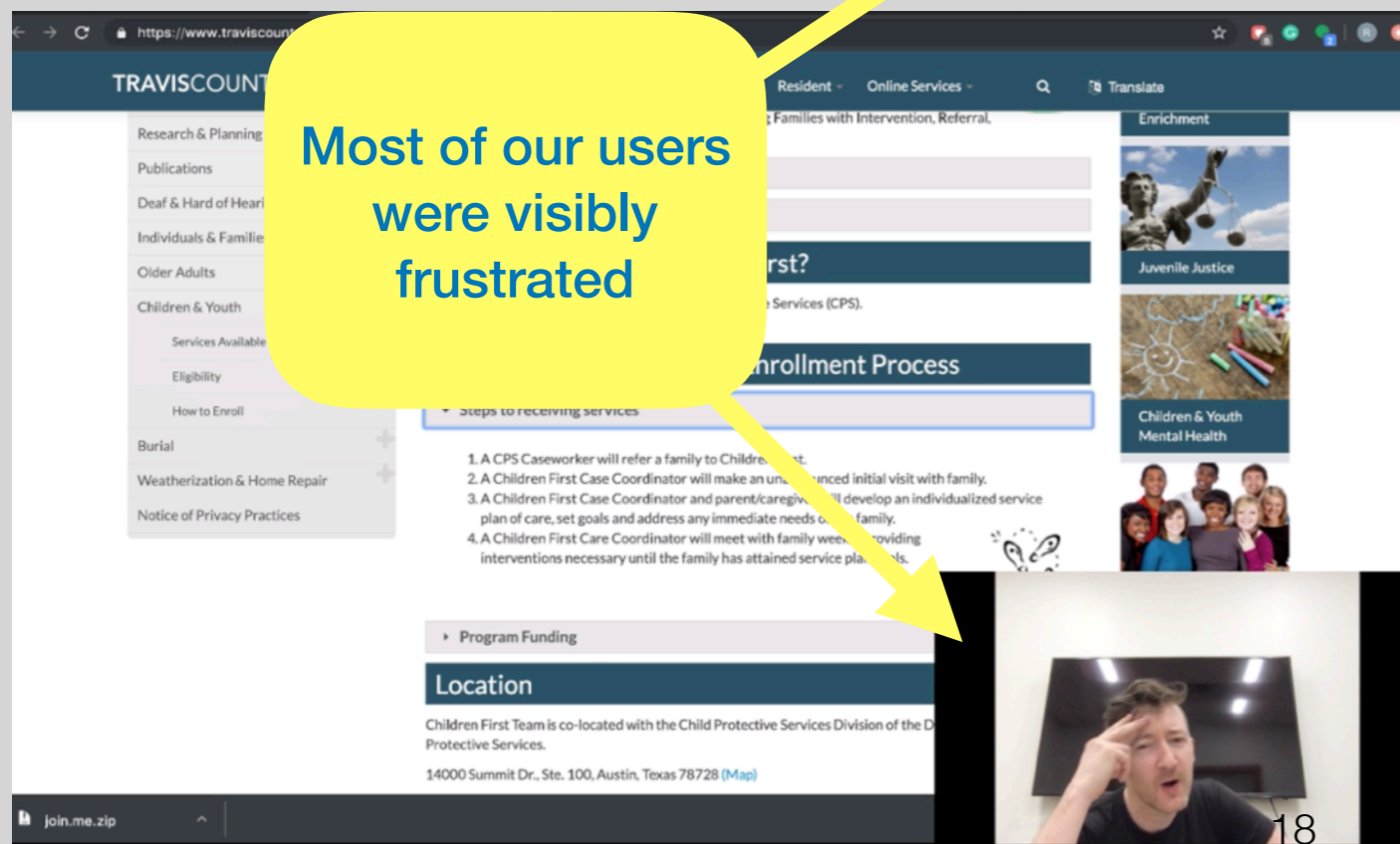-RP3

LINK (REGISTRATION 2)
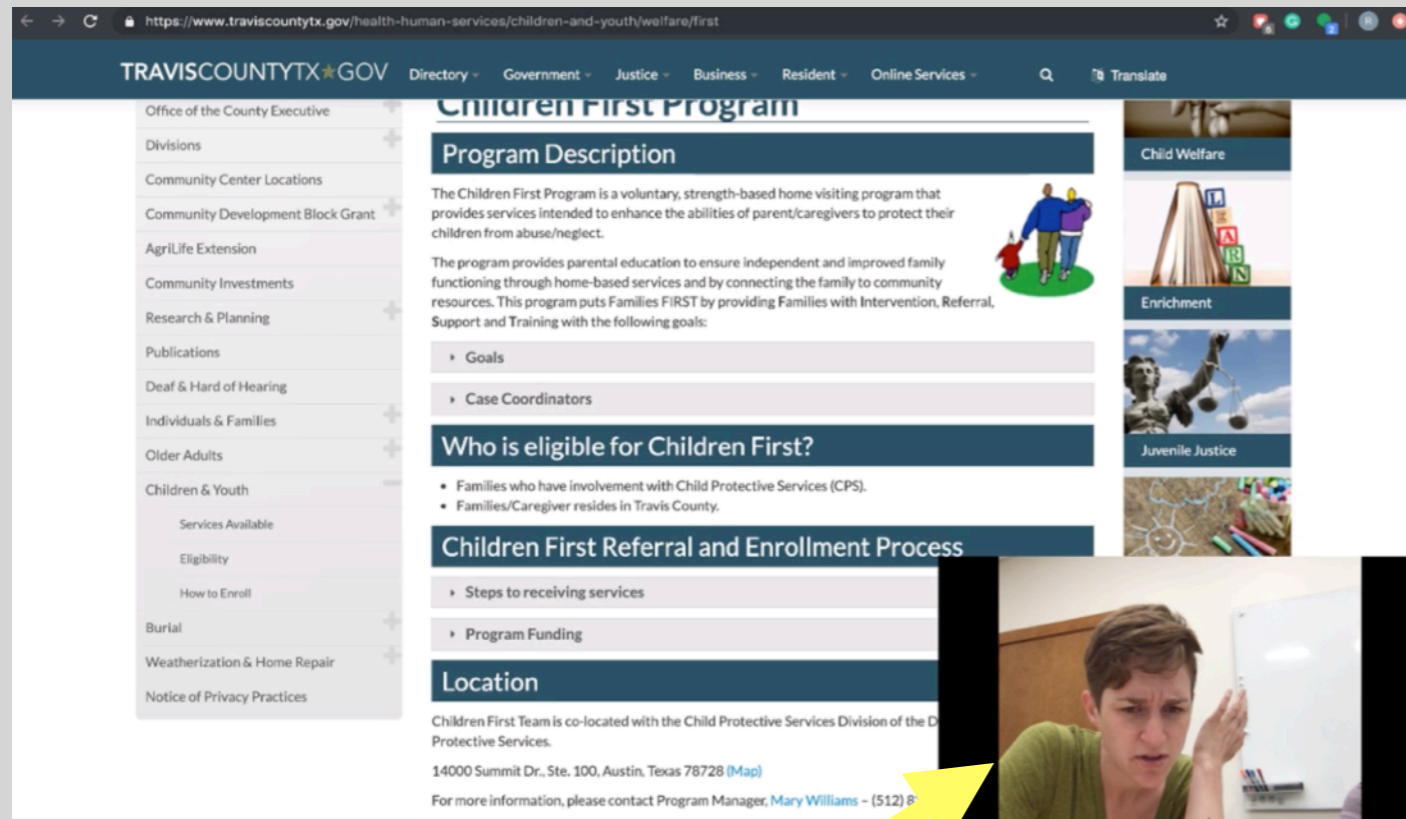
RECOMMENDATION: CHANGE THE CHILDREN FIRST REGISTRATION LINK DESTINATION TO A REGISTRATION FORM

- None of our users understood how to register
- A simple form that appears on the same page would provide a better registration experience (see p. 19)

Most of our users were visibly frustrated

Okay, that totally threw me off. *Where am I supposed to go now?* I have to read? I've got two kids screaming in the background.
-RP6

FORM (REGISTRATION 3)

RECOMMENDATION: CLICKING REGISTER SHOULD OPEN A FORM USERS CAN FILL OUT ON THE SAME PAGE
- Social workers expressed a preference for same-page registration
- Having the form on-site would allow for a consistent experience across different classes

The experience of *staying on one site — it's so much better*
-RP3

ACCESSIBILITY (REGISTRATION 4)

English | Spanish
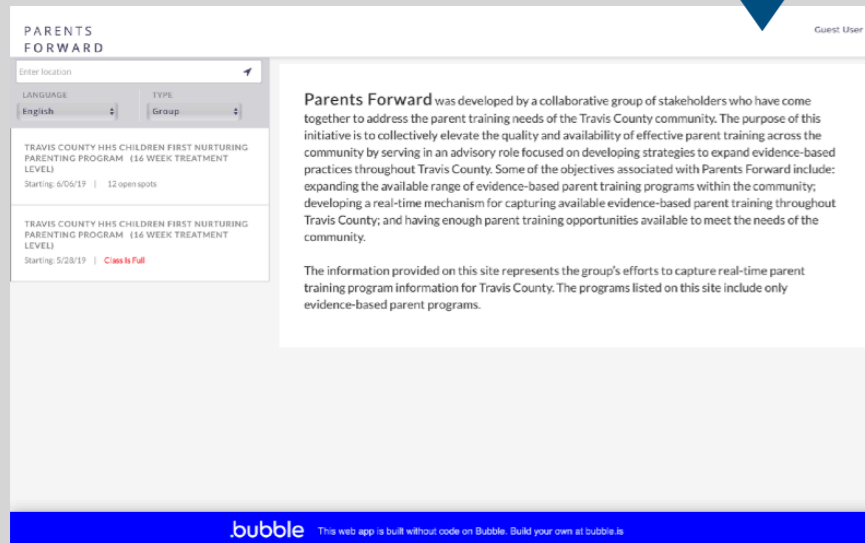
What I thought was for parents *is actually for social workers*
-RP7

RECOMMENDATION: MAKE REGISTRATION ACCESSIBLE TO MORE PARENTS

- Given that increased enrollment is a goal, accessibility should be a priority
- Parents without CPS workers did not know whether they were allowed to register or how to register
  - A separate registration button for those without CPS workers and/or a "How To" section that addresses their needs would help
- It's great that classes in Spanish are available, but it may be difficult for those who do not speak English to register for those classes
  - An option to translate the page into Spanish would help
  - A "Send Info in Spanish" option would also be helpful

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

Thanks for the opportunity to help you improve the Parents Forward user experience! This appendix lists additional research findings that support the recommendations above.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES: PERSONABILITY

COLOR:
- "Cold… neutral… uninspired" -LP1
- "It's boring… It's so boring I don't even want to keep going in it" -RP5
- "It almost feels hostile — this color scheme" -LP4
- "There's no color to it… it's not making me feel warm inside" -RP6
- "Boring, and not colorful" -RP9
- "Everything is so grey. I don't know if this is just a test" -RP3
- Keep the color scheme clean:
  - "I also see that it's clean" -RP3
  - "I respect it… because it doesn't have a lot of fluff to it" -RP5
  - "Relatively clear and clean design" -RP9

DESCRIPTIONS:
- "As a person who is always very conscious of race and language, I like to know who the facilitators are going to be. Just because that also plays a factor. Is it a man? Is it a woman? Is it somebody who is white? Is it somebody who it black? Whatever, you name it. I think it's important, for me, to know what to expect" -RP3
- "Testimonials — ooh, that would make me happy!" -RP6
- "Maybe I would be able to find more resources — not just classes, but like frequently asked questions, I would be able to see reviews from other parents… is it one provider, two providers?" -RP3
- LP2 said testimonials are important: "How did this class help?"

VISUALS:
- "It's not very inviting or anything, because there aren't any photos, so it doesn't make me want to stay on this page" -RP4
- "…there's no pictures, there's no attractive factor. It just feels like a dull website" -RP3
- "It would be nice if they had pictures of happy people going" -RP6
- "…there's no information about what you're supposed to do. It should just be one sentence" -RP5
- "Very bland, like it's text all over, and there's a lot of white space. It's very not-warm." -RP3
- "Maybe some more pictures of happy people would be good" -RP4
- "…very not-friendly" -RP6
- LP4 said more of a "welcoming" and less of an "authoritarian" look would bring down stress levels

TONE:
- "…would be nice if it was a little bit lighter tone, you know? Massage the words a little bit" -RP6
- "You feel like you're just another number to them" -RP6
- "This website makes me feel like I'm a criminal looking through criminal records" RP2
- "…childcare will be an issue" -RP7

ADDITIONAL QUOTES: FINDING CLASSES

CHECKBOX:
- "You don't know what the options are… What if I were not so tech-savvy? [I wouldn't] know what those two arrows mean" -RP3
- "It would be nice if it started with 'All' instead of 'English' and 'Group'" -RP6
- "I can't see a path forward at all" -LP4
- "To see no Spanish language stuff available is a bit shocking" -LP4
- "I might not be able to complete this task" -RP3
- "I don't know where I'd go from here" -RP4
- LP1 thought there were no Spanish classes
- LP2 didn't notice the language dropdown while looking for a class in Spanish

COMPARISON PAGE:
- "The challenge was figuring out which classes I needed to take" -LP2
- "I'm using context to figure out what 'Group' means… that's somewhat confusing" -LP2
- "I don't exactly know the difference" -LP2
- "I guess I am looking for In-Home classes, but I don't really know. I don't know what to do now" -RP7
- "I thought In-Home was access to therapy" -RP7
- LP2 on the class titles: "I don't know what those mean"

TRANSPORTATION:
- RP5 and LP4 didn't notice a change after entering a location in the search bar
- RP1 pointed out that many of his clients lack access to stable transportation
- "It seems like the In-Home would be better if they didn't have a car" -LP2
- "This seems to indicate that it is going to find me something near me" -LP2
- LP4 thought the search bar should be a "last resort"
- RP5 and LP1 liked the map function, but based on their other comments I believe this is simply because it was an image

TECHNICAL BUGS:
- LP1 had trouble exiting her search
- "Some people don't have computers" -RP3
- RP1 couldn't get the site to work on their iPad or cellphone in Safari

BUTTON:
- "The register button is small, and I know it's hyperlinked in blue, but even as I'm tech savvy… I would prefer that it be bigger: 'register' in big, bold letters" -RP3
- LP4 did not find the register link obviously clickable

FORM:
- "The experience of staying on one site — it's so much better" -RP3
- "This feels like I shouldn't be here… Holy cow, that's a lot of info" -LP2

LINK:
- "Okay, that totally threw me off. Where am I supposed to go now? I have to read? I've got two kids screaming in the background" -RP6
- "I click register and it take me to… a boat load of information" -RP7
- "It doesn't feel very intuitive or helpful. Especially since you hit register and it just brings you to more information — it doesn't really show you how to register" -RP4
- "I'm not really sure how I would go about registering from here… maybe I would call?" -RP4
- "Where do I register?" -RP3
- "…not sure if I've missed something" -RP3

ACCESSIBILITY:
- "What I thought was for parents is actually for social workers" -RP7
- "I would love to go to these things, but you never really know if you can… Is it something that the public can go to? Or is it just for people that are in trouble?" -RP6
- "It does not appear that I can actually register, because it says I need a CPS worker referral" -RP7
- LP1 didn't know what a referral was