Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program

Grantee: California Department of Child Support Services
Project Title: Digital Outreach and Media Engagement (DOME) Project
Project Site: Sacramento County Department of Child Support Services (DCSS)
Target Population: Custodial parents who do not have an IV-D child support case and are receiving public assistance other than Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
Geographic Location: Sacramento County, CA
Planned Interventions: Ad Services, Content Sharing, Direct Emails

Project Summary
The DOME project will focus on custodial parents:
- who do not currently have a IV-D child support case
- who have been identified as single parents in Sacramento County using 2016 U.S. Census Bureau data
- who receive non-TANF public assistance benefits
- who have not initiated a child support case by either voluntary or mandatory means

Based on U.S. Census Bureau data, potentially one out of every three families in Sacramento County could use child support services. DCSS will test the hypothesis that an increase in digital outreach, communication, and engagement to the target audience will result in an increase of new applications for child support services.

DCSS anticipates that the DOME project will show that there is a need for the child support program to embrace digital channels as a means to interact with a new generation of parents. By opening new digital channels, DCSS expects to expand communication, interaction, and engagement with existing child support participants. DCSS also anticipates disproving the idea that mandatory enrollments are necessary nationwide to serve children and families.

Project Approach
DCSS will deliver visual message content to the target audience introducing the child support program and its services with the specific goal of encouraging recipients to submit an application for services. The DOME project will establish official channels to distribute verified and unbiased materials about child support services. DCSS will use video to reach a larger customer base and test the effectiveness of three distinct digital channels. To evaluate project outcomes, DCSS has partnered with an evaluation contractor with extensive experience in evaluating child support program interventions utilizing new communications approaches. By using random assignment in each intervention, DCSS will be able to rigorously examine whether or not each digital marketing technique increased the number of IV-D child support cases opened among parents.

Intervention One: Paid Advertisements
Description: DCSS will subscribe to interest-based target ads through digital platforms (Facebook and YouTube), using specific zip codes. Each video will be active for a 90-day period.

Evaluation Plan Highlights: The intervention will be evaluated using data analytics such as: number of video views; reach and click-through rates for social media and search engine-based advertising; and engagement (e.g., likes, comments, retweets) with social media content. As part of the Learn-Innovate-Improve method, DCSS will use Facebook Audience Insights to review consumer posts and feedback.
post-viewing. YouTube metrics will allow DCSS to determine how many people watched the video for 30 seconds or more, how many finished watching, and how many watched part of the video.

**Intervention Two: Content Sharing by Partner Agencies**

**Description:** DCSS will share program content with partner agencies (the Department of Human Assistance and Covered California) so that it can be delivered to targeted subscribers to these agencies’ existing social media channels.

**Evaluation Plan Highlights:** Data analytics will include reach and click-through rates for social media and search engine-based advertising and engagement (e.g., likes, comments, retweets) with social media content.

**Intervention Three: Direct Delivery of Content by Email**

**Description:** DCSS will use contact information for the target audience from referrals by partner agencies (the Department of Human Assistance and Covered California). Email content will be delivered directly to parents using MailChimp.

**Evaluation Plan Highlights:** Data analytics (e.g., read rates, click-throughs) will be used to understand how the intervention is received by the target population.