Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program

Grantee: Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Support Division
Project Title: Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program
Project Site: Multiple (see Geographic Location)
Target Population: Parents and families who could benefit from child support services
Geographic Location: 12 pilot counties
Planned Interventions: Targeted Digital Marketing, Electronic Child Support Services Application, and Text Messaging

Project Summary
Mirroring national trends, the Minnesota child support program has seen a steady decline in its caseload. There are a substantial number of children not currently served that could potentially benefit from child support services. This project will target both current program participants and non-participants. By finding solutions that offer education, build awareness, and provide program information, Minnesota expects to change perceptions held by noncustodial parents. For this project, Minnesota will partner with up to 12 pilot counties to get a representative sample of geography, population demographics, and caseload size to implement and support the goals of the grant.

Project Approach
Minnesota will gather information and conduct research to develop a better understanding of what current program participants and non-participants think and know about child support. This understanding will help with the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project interventions. Information and feedback will be collected from parents in the program to enhance action plans and outreach strategies.

Intervention One: Targeted Digital Marketing
Description: Minnesota will use targeted digital marketing to more effectively reach parents and families who could benefit from child support services. Using five digital platforms, Minnesota will place ads where parents who match the demographics of those in the program’s caseload are likely to visit. The goals of this intervention are to:
• Increase the number of applications for new child support cases in the pilot counties
• Increase traffic to county and state child support websites
• Increase the number of phone calls to the pilot county child support offices
• Develop an electronic application to make it easier for parents to apply for services

Evaluation Plan Highlights: Minnesota will use the Learn-Innovate-Improve model to make adjustments across multiple 90-day campaigns. For example, if one platform seems to be performing better than others, Minnesota could focus more on that platform. Intervention metrics will include Facebook analytics, individual ad performance, numbers of impressions, clicks, and click-through rates, in addition to analytics from the website and pilot county websites.

Intervention Two: Develop Electronic Application Submission Process
Description: For Intervention Two, Minnesota will develop an online application and an electronic application submission process. These tools will help parents more easily complete and submit an application for services.
Evaluation Plan Highlights: To evaluate this intervention, Minnesota will measure the number of applications received pre- and post-implementation.

Intervention Three: Text Messaging

Description: Minnesota will contract with a vendor to enable child support staff in the pilot counties to text program messages to parents. Texting can be used to send payment reminders to noncustodial parents, reminders to noncustodial parents who have received a notice of intent to suspend a driver’s license, and messages to custodial parents who have unclaimed funds. There are three goals for this intervention:

- Increase the percentage of current child support paid by parents who pay by means other than income withholding
- Decrease the number of driver’s licenses suspended after parents receive notice that they are eligible for suspension
- Decrease the amount of unclaimed funds by custodial parents

Evaluation Plan Highlights: Minnesota will use a comparison group from non-pilot counties to assess the impact of this intervention. Metrics will include amounts paid, percent of current support paid, payments toward arrears, the number of noncustodial parents who respond to the text messages, the number of suspensions, and the amount of unclaimed funds. Responses received as a result of text messages sent will also be tracked.