Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program

Grantee: Virginia Department of Social Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE)
Project Title: Digital Child Support Marketing Demonstration
Project Site: Statewide
Target Population: Parents that could benefit from child support services
Geographic Location: Statewide
Planned Interventions: Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Auto-reply Texting (Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts), Auto-Reply Texting (Family Law Practices)

Project Summary
DCSE will test three successive digital marketing interventions to reach parents who could benefit from child support services. Through these interventions, they seek to prompt parents to engage in two-way communication with DCSE and to request and access DCSE services.

Project Approach
DCSE intends to conduct a sequence of three 90-day digital marketing interventions. This approach gives consideration to the disposition of parents (the mindset or stage of “where they are”) and recognizes that parents may need a combination of high-tech and high-touch interaction to successfully navigate the establishment process. The digital outreach marketing goal is to increase the number of applications for child support services. The iterative nature of Learn-Innovate-Improve will allow DCSE to determine whether technology can reduce the time for parents to contact DCSE and whether digital marketing can impact family involvement.

Intervention One: Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
Description: DCSE will create a new website with a simple name and optimize the site by embedding common child support-related search terms in the content. The objective is to reach the self-directed parent in high-tech pre-contemplation (unaware of child support program), move them to contemplation (aware of DCSE), and then to preparation (request information/assistance from DCSE). Search terms will also be used to make ad placements to draw additional traffic.

Evaluation Plan Highlights: The number of child support applications and cases will be monitored, and DCSE will compare caseload data from the month before the intervention and the month after the intervention to assess whether there was any increase in applications for child support, and whether there was an increase in the number of new active cases. DCSE will also use web analytics, such as the number of views, click-through rates, form completion rates, SEO metrics, and the number of inbound links to the website.

Intervention Two: Auto-Reply Texting (Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts)
Description: DCSE will identify the needs of parents without child support cases that come before juvenile and domestic relations (JDR) judges. These needs, such as employment or job training, will serve as indicators that the parents may benefit from child support services. DCSE will provide JDR courts with print materials that have a special number to text and a request code. When parents text the code, they will receive an autoreply with a trackable link to DCSE’s new site.

Evaluation Plan Highlights: DCSE will compare caseload data from the month before the intervention and the month after the intervention to assess whether there was any increase in applications for child support and whether there was an increase in the number of new active cases.
Intervention Three: Auto-Reply Texting (Family Law Practices)

**Description:** Family law practices that interact with parents who do not have child support cases will be provided with print materials that have a special number to text and a request code. When parents text the code, they will receive an autoreply with a trackable link to DCSE’s new site.

**Evaluation Plan Highlights:** DCSE will compare caseload data from the month before the intervention and the month after the intervention to assess whether there was any increase in applications for child support and whether there was an increase in the number of new active cases.