Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program

Grantee: Washington State Division of Child Support (DCS)
Project Title: Using Digital Marketing to Increase Participation in the Child Support Program
Project Site: Statewide
Target Population: Custodial parents not receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
Geographic Location: Statewide
Planned Interventions: Social Media, Fee-based Digital Advertising, Email Marketing

Project Summary
DCS’s goal is to increase the number of applications from custodial parents not receiving TANF. To achieve this, this project will modernize communication methods and increase outreach to parents. The project objective is to determine how digital marketing may help DCS reach and serve more families. Interventions will focus on digital marketing approaches and partnerships for outreach to families that could benefit from child support services, including two-way digital communication and engagement with parents. DCS anticipates that the planned marketing strategies will increase awareness of and participation in the program. DCS will partner with experienced social research firms to analyze data and evaluate progress toward outcomes.

Project Approach
DCS will develop and implement three promising interventions: raising awareness through social media, fee-based digital advertising (DCS ad buys), and using email marketing to generate leads and nurture relationships. Using these strategies, DCS seeks to reach a tech-savvy population of parents. By offering more modern service delivery methods designed to meet the needs of the target population, DCS will be better able to establish effective long-term relationships with the next generation of parents.

Intervention One: Raising Awareness through Social Media
Description: By making information about Washington’s child support program more easily accessible through social media, DCS will connect with the target audience of custodial parents. A targeted campaign will be designed to leverage existing state social media channels. DCS will also explore the possibility of division-specific social media accounts. Strategies will include audience segmentation via market research and profile creation, social media content planning, social media advertising, and private social groups to help educate parents about eligibility and enrollment.

Evaluation Plan Highlights: DCS will work with designated internal departments to establish baseline data for this intervention and with third-party contactors for data analysis. Data analytics will be pulled from the digital marketing tools used in the campaign before, during, and after the intervention. Administrative data will also be used. The specific evaluative approach will be determined based on recommendations of a third-party evaluator.

Intervention Two: Fee-based Digital Advertising
Description: DCS will design a creative advertising campaign focused on marketing to non-TANF custodial parents. Marketing materials will include information on the benefits of establishing a child support case through DCS and will offer digital communication options for accessing additional information and assistance from DCS. The strategies designed for this intervention will consider which social media or other digital advertising options would have the greatest impact on the target audience. DCS will use a variety of methods to maximize the number of non-TANF custodial parents reached.
**Evaluation Plan Highlights:** DCS will work with third-party contactors to analyze project data and with internal departments to establish baseline data. Digital advertising metrics will be used to assess the effects of the intervention. The specific evaluative approach will be determined based on recommendations of the evaluator.

**Intervention Three: Email Marketing**

**Description:** DCS has not previously used email for marketing purposes and recognizes the need to modernize business practices. Intervention Three will generate leads and nurture relationships through email marketing. The focus will be non-TANF custodial parents who have expressed interest in services but have not applied, as well as current customers who want to learn more about what DCS can provide. DCS will design a variety of marketing materials to be sent in personalized email messages for this targeted outreach campaign. When current and potential customers visit the child support section of the Washington Department of Social and Health Services website, they will be invited to agree to receive emails from DCS. DCS will create a dedicated contact email address that will be monitored by DCS communications staff who will follow up with parents as needed. This follow-up may include email, phone, or live chat options.

**Evaluation Plan Highlights:** As with the other interventions, DCS will work with designated internal departments to establish baseline data and to create protocols for the secure transfer and disposition of data after the project’s conclusion. The evaluation will use administrative data to analyze the potential relationships between the intervention data analytics and other child support outcomes.