

Appendix F: Notification Letter

Dear [EOC Project Director],

I am writing to invite you to join an exciting new demonstration project called **Text Ed** – a chance to test out strategic text messaging designed to help EOC clients fulfill their goal of enrolling in college.

Recently, well-crafted text messaging programs have gained a lot of attention as a promising way to help individuals – particularly first generation and low-income students – navigate unfamiliar college enrollment steps and take advantage of important resources to help them succeed in college. Through **Text Ed**, you have an opportunity to try this kind of strategy at your EOC **at no cost** during the demonstration.

Participating EOCs will receive the following during the demonstration:

- **Expert-developed messages** designed to help clients navigate the college-going process. These messages will be automatically sent to EOC clients. Message content will be aligned with EOCs' existing processes, context, and client needs in order to enhance the current work of EOC staff.
- **Training and technical assistance on a user-friendly text messaging system.** EOC staff will be trained to review and respond to incoming messages from clients, using an online text messaging system that the project team will set up.

We expect that the work **Text Ed** does behind the scenes to send automatic messages will free up staff time to respond to clients who might need more support. While some of the messages will require a response back from EOC staff, we expect that level of effort to be minimal – about 30 minutes a day at most to review the incoming messages and send a quick response. You can think of it as a process similar to emailing back and forth with a few clients each week.

Participating EOCs will also be part of a rigorous study to determine whether use of the text messaging system increases college enrollment among EOC clients. The study will be conducted by my organization, MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and social policy organization, and Dr. Lindsay Page from the University of Pittsburgh, an expert in using text messaging to help students access college. Your participation is voluntary. Most of the data we will collect for the study will be obtained directly from the Federal Student Aid Office, the National Student Clearinghouse, and the Text Ed technology vendor. In addition, we will also work with you and your team to make sure we have important information about the clients you serve and updated information about their progress as they move through the college application and financial aid process. We expect that the process of sending us study-related data will take on average about 20 minutes a week, and the process of updating client-level information that will help ensure that individuals are receiving appropriately customized text messages should take no more than 20 minutes every other week. We will also talk with you (via a 75 minute phone interview) to learn more about your site to make sure the text messages are appropriately customized to the programs and practices at your EOC. All information collected by MDRC for the study will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity! Though this project is currently open to all EOCs, the study will only be able to accept approximately 20 EOCs from across the country. An information packet, which includes an overview of the project and an FAQ sheet, is included to provide you with more information about Text Ed. **Please also visit the project website at TextEdProject.com to find out more.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with our project team directly at TextEd@mdrc.org or 1 (800) 221-3165 x4543. Thank you very much for the important work that you and your staff do. We hope you'll participate and take advantage of this exciting new opportunity.

Best,

Alexander Mayer, PhD
Project Director and Principal Investigator
MDRC