

CHALLENGE

KEEP UP WITH DOCUMENTATION

Caseworkers at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) often faced overwhelming documentation demands which involve long hours typing up notes from evaluations, meetings, interviews, phone calls, and more. OCFS needed a way to streamline the documentation process to speed turnaround and free caseworkers to focus more time on helping children and their families.

SOLUTION

DRAGON PROFESSIONAL 11.5

OCFS conducted a three-month pilot of Dragon speech recognition software that included two training sessions and ongoing phone and email support from Nuance. During the pilot, caseworkers used Dragon to create documents and manage email and to dictate field notes into the agency's case management system.

RESULTS

FASTER TURNAROUND OF HIGH-QUALITY CASE DOCUMENTATION

By introducing Dragon, OCFS has significantly cut documentation time, improved narrative quality, and boosted caseworker morale. In a survey of pilot participants, nearly 70 percent of respondents stated that Dragon saved them at least 30 minutes or more per day, and 80 percent said that Dragon enables them to work more efficiently. Features like voice shortcuts, macros, and vocabulary customization simplified the documentation process even more.

MAINE OFFICE OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES INCREASES CASEWORKER PRODUCTIVITY WITH DRAGON NATURALLY SPEAKING PROFESSIONAL

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS), serves children and their families across eight county-based districts. This state-administered public child welfare agency, which received more than 17,000 new reports of child abuse or neglect last year, investigates reported incidents on behalf of Maine communities, working to protect children and to guide families in creating safe homes. If the agency is unable to mitigate family problems that put children at risk, its professional staff explores options for kinship care or evaluates suitable foster and adoptive homes.

OCFS caseworkers find social work to be a rewarding, but demanding profession. In addition to the valuable services they provide within their communities, these caseworkers are confronted with significant documentation requirements, which add even more stress to an already taxing job. Ever-increasing documentation demands mean that these professionals are spending more time in the office typing up notes and less time in the field ensuring child safety and helping families in crisis.

TAKING DRAGON FOR A TEST DRIVE

Staff at OCFS's central office in Augusta, Maine, needed a way to help caseworkers and their supervisors keep up with escalating documentation requirements. After evaluating the latest version of Dragon speech recognition software, OCFS decided to conduct a Dragon pilot with approximately 45 employees—caseworkers, licensing professionals, and supervisors — in District 5, which services Kennebec and Somerset counties in central Maine.

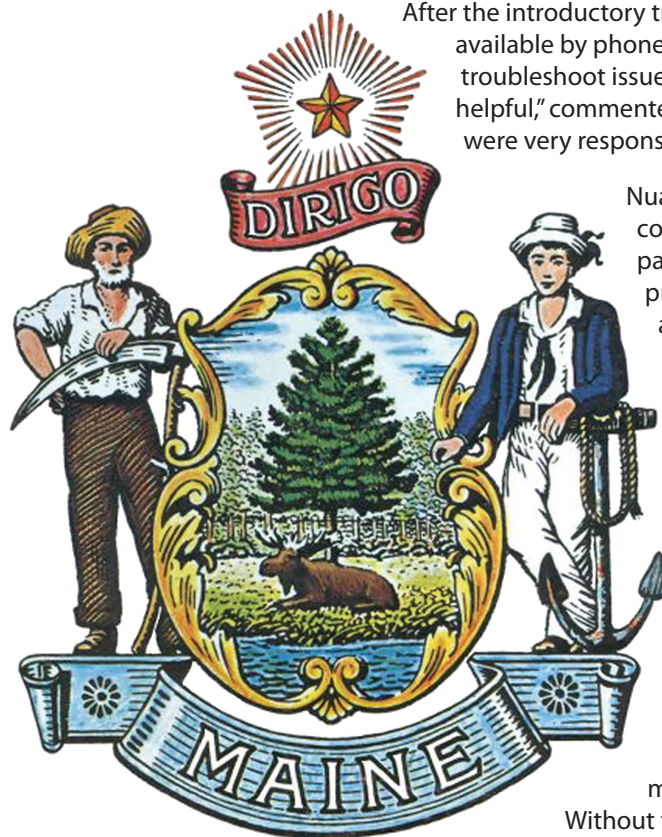
"The pilot was intended to test out Dragon and see whether there would be general worker acceptance of the software and whether they could use it successfully," explains Ellen Beerits, Child Welfare Program Administrator in OCFS District 5. "Then the decision would be made whether we would deploy Dragon state wide."

ACCELERATING USER ADOPTION

After the OCFS IT department had installed Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional on the pilot participants' laptops, Nuance held an initial two-day training session at the Augusta district office. Participants were divided into four groups, each of which attended a half day of training. "This provided an excellent introduction to using Dragon, including how to dictate documentation and emails, navigate applications, use voice shortcuts, customize vocabulary, and even create macros," explained Beerits.

The OCFS users started realizing productivity gains almost immediately. Dragon turns voice into text three times faster than most people type with up to 99% accuracy right out of the gate. The software learns to recognize the user's voice instantly and becomes even more accurate with continued use.

"I was a bit skeptical about using Dragon at first," said OCFS caseworker Ryanne Letourneau who had experienced previous versions of speech recognition with mixed results. "But after only five minutes in the initial Dragon training, I was amazed at how much you can get done in such a short period of time."



After the introductory training, Nuance account management and training staff were available by phone or email to answer users' questions, provide guidance, and troubleshoot issues. "From the beginning, the Nuance team was very accessible and helpful," commented Beerits. "Our people would contact them with questions and they were very responsive."

Nuance returned to OCFS one month after the initial training to conduct a second Dragon training session. The trainers met with pilot participants in small groups to review the software's features and to provide more advanced instruction, including how to use Dragon with an approved digital voice recorder. This capability allows caseworkers to dictate their notes in between appointments in the field and use Dragon to automatically transcribe the audio files when they connect the recorder to their laptops. OCFS staff came away from this second training session even more proficient and confident Dragon users.

"In my opinion, this was the best introduction and training of any software or computer-related solution I've ever done," said OCFS caseworker Amy Cobb. "I thought it was amazing."

The training prepared OCFS District 5 users to use Dragon to create case narrative logs, email, and other documentation such as assessments, treatment plans, legal paperwork, and reports. Now caseworkers spend less time at their desks producing narratives and more time returning calls, making referrals, and meeting with clients.

Without the stress of paperwork piling up back at the office, caseworkers can focus more on helping clients.

REALIZING DRAMATIC RESULTS

Dragon allows caseworkers to get more done faster by streamlining the documentation process, particularly narrative text. "Narrative logs are the number one cause of our documentation distress," explained Cobb. "The logs are where we input every single thing we do and every contact we have whether it's face to face or over the phone. Now I use Dragon to dictate all the contents of my yellow notebook — which I take to homes, schools, hospitals, prisons, and everywhere else — into MACWIS."

OCFS users have created macros that enable them to insert dictated text into specific document templates within the Maine Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS), a sophisticated, custom electronic records system built for the agency by

DRAGON NATURALLYSPEAKING CASE STUDY

Unisys. The users dictate their notes onto the screen and say a simple command, such as, "Insert parent interview," to automatically place the text into the proper MACWIS template.

Entering information into the case management system is now completed faster than ever before. In a survey of pilot participants, nearly 70 percent of respondents stated that Dragon saved them at least 30 minutes or more per day, and 80 percent said that Dragon enables them to work more efficiently. In fact, several participants commented that documentation took only half as long with Dragon when compared to traditional manual data entry. A full 100 percent of the pilot survey participants stated that they would recommend Dragon to co-workers and peers.

Dragon is not only helping caseworkers complete documentation more quickly with few keystrokes, but it is improving the quality of their narratives, too. As a result, when the office receives a call related to a case, any staff member can instantly find detailed documentation in MACWIS. With easy access to more complete case records, the agency is able to serve children and their families faster and more effectively.

"I'm so much more effective with Dragon than I am without it," said Letourneau. "I'm thinking more about what I'm putting in my narrative and I'm adding more detail because I actually have the time to do it. With Dragon, I can make sure that everything that needs to be in there is in there, and I can do it in a fraction of the time compared to typing."

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Dragon has also increased job satisfaction for many OCFS District 5 workers by enabling them to better manage their documentation workload and spend more time out in their communities.

"Dragon has resulted in improved morale among some staff by providing a tool to make their jobs more doable," said Beerits.

MOVING FORWARD

Based on the success of the District 5 pilot, OCFS has decided to deploy Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional state wide, rolling out the software on a district-by-district basis using the same proven training and support model.

"The pilot feedback validated that Dragon can significantly improve caseworker productivity," concluded Beerits. "The Dragon roll-out process, incorporating multiple training sessions and ongoing support, greatly facilitated user adoption and helped ensure the pilot's success."

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