

Ed Madaus:
PROTECTING KIDS WITH MORE EFFICIENT REPORTS, THANKS TO DRAGON

Ed Madaus has a lot of experience protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Not only is he Executive Director of Guild of St. Agnes, which has provided child care programs in Massachusetts since 1913, but he also gets involved in the court investigations that ensue when children are taken from parents. Those sensitive assignments, which he has been taking on since 1996, involve the creation of 20- to 30-page reports that meticulously examine the circumstances that led to the removal.

"I do a thorough history of the case and a back history on each person involved, along with a conclusion, summary, and recommendations," Madaus explains. "I begin the process with a hard copy report that's sent to me, so I have the necessary background information."

With a thorough understanding of the case in mind, Madaus visits the family and conducts interviews with all involved, writing notes the entire time. Because he's such a slow typist, he pays \$4 a page to have those handwritten notes turned into the text for his final reports. He typically prepares 24 reports a year, so he estimates the annual cost at approximately \$3,000, which he bears himself because he conducts the work as an independent contractor.

All that changed, however, when he purchased a copy of Dragon NaturallySpeaking speech recognition software. "It was the best investment I've made in a long time," Madaus remarks. With Dragon installed on his computer, he simply reviews his notes and speaks the report narrative, enabling him to not only

save \$3,000 a year but also produce his reports more quickly and with fewer errors.

"The reports are better overall," Madaus observes. "Speaking it out is more accurate and fuller — it gives the reader a better understanding of the case." In addition, he has found himself doing less writing while conducting interviews because he can rely more heavily on keywords, since he doesn't have to worry about a typist trying to understand what he means. As a result, he can put more of his attention on the interview and make sure he has adequately covered all the necessary information.

Expanding His Repertoire

With a few Dragon-supported reports under his belt, Madaus began using the speech recognition software for e-mail too,

both in his court investigation work and in his Guild of St. Agnes Executive Director duties. "I wasn't doing a good job hunting and pecking on the keyboard while composing and replying to e-mails," he admits. "My e-mail replies used to be as brief as possible, but now I can just speak my responses and be more in-depth with them."

Madaus is so impressed with Dragon NaturallySpeaking that he encourages social workers and other state government employees to take advantage of the software to improve

reporting and save money, an important topic during a time of ever-tightening budgets. "I worked for the state department of social services for 23 years, and Dragon is something they could use," he says. "States often pay social workers overtime to catch up on paperwork on Saturdays, but with Dragon they could greatly reduce the time needed to get that part of their jobs done."

