



New York State
Office of
Children & Family
Services

www.ocfs.state.ny.us

David A. Paterson
Governor

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner

Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144

October 30, 2009

Dear Local Social Services District Commissioner:

As you are aware, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) recently expanded the Portable Technology Demonstration Project to offer laptops to Local District foster care caseworkers, in addition to those previously offered to CPS caseworkers. In an effort to expand and capitalize on that initiative's success, OCFS is also making available, license upgrades to the *Dragon Naturally Speaking* (version 10.0) software. This software is designed to assist staff in entering narrative data into computer applications, such as CONNECTIONS. *Dragon Naturally Speaking* is a voice recognition software product, which has been tested and determined to work effectively with CONNECTIONS.

Staff will use the *Dragon Naturally Speaking* software by speaking into a microphone attached to a headset. Once the user trains the software to recognize his or her voice, the spoken word is translated into text that can be copied into CONNECTIONS narrative fields, such as in progress notes, or into other large text fields. It may also be used with e-mail and *Microsoft Word* documents. We suggest that casework staff be the primary users of this application and highly recommend its use with newly deployed devices, such as those used by CPS workers as part of the Portable Technology Demonstration Projects or with those currently being provided to foster care workers. To operate most efficiently the software must be used on a PC that has at least 1 gigabyte of memory.

During 2005, OCFS purchased *Dragon Naturally Speaking* Version 8.0 licenses. Since that time, newer versions have been released and we have received positive feedback from a local district that is currently using this newer version. A local district manager stated the biggest improvement with the newer version is that "it saves huge amounts of time in training the speech recognition process. Previously, it seemed extensive training was necessary and even then, the accuracy was not as good as it is now. This current version of *Dragon Naturally Speaking* (Version 10) also appears to be much faster according to staff. These new features have allowed caseworkers to free up their valuable time to do other casework activities."

Each participating District will be assigned a specific number of *Dragon Naturally Speaking* licenses. OCFS plans to deploy the licenses centrally by pushing it to local district desktops. Additionally, each participating District will receive CDs to be used for installing the software, if necessary, at anytime post deployment, along with a headset for each license. Finally, OCFS will sponsor regional "train-the-trainer" sessions that will be led by *Dragon Naturally Speaking* trainers. These "train-the-trainer" sessions will be three-hour sessions designed to prepare the designated District staff person ("local champion") to assist users at their sites. Attendance at this session is mandatory in order to be assigned licenses.

The key to successful implementation during the 2005 rollout was to have a "local champion." This individual was responsible for providing on-site training and technical assistance to his or her peers. The Local Districts that assigned a "local champion" to be responsible for project implementation, as well as train and support co-workers, reaped the greatest benefits in terms of staff acceptance and effective use of the software. Districts that provided limited or no structured on site support had less positive results with the software.

Technical support for *Dragon Naturally Speaking* will be achieved through a link to the vendor's website, which contains various self-instructional training and other technical assistance materials. Additionally, OCFS-IT triage and regional field staff will be available to provide on-going support to users as needed. Finally, the headsets provided with *Dragon Naturally Speaking* will have a one year manufacturer warranty. Information concerning this warranty will be provided when the software is deployed.



An Equal Opportunity Employer

Local Districts wishing to receive *Dragon Naturally Speaking* licenses should submit a letter of intent that describes the District's business plan to implement and support the deployment of this software. This letter should identify:

1. How many licenses are being requested;
2. The role of the staff person(s) that will use the software;
3. Who will serve as implementation coordinator ("local champion") and how that individual will train and support users.

Requests for licenses that do not contain an adequate business plan will not be honored.

Letters of intent should be sent by the local social services district commissioner to Jack.Nabozny@ocfs.state.ny.us or sent by mail to:

NYSOCFS
Attn: Jack Nabozny
Information Technology
52 Washington St.
South Building / Room 116
Rensselaer, NY 12144

All requests must be received by December 1, 2009. In the event that the number of licenses requested exceeds the number available, OCFS will distribute the licenses on a proportional basis.

Any additional questions can be referred to:
CONNECTIONSCommunications@dfa.state.ny.us

Sincerely,

Gladys Carrión, Esq.
Commissioner

cc: William T. Gettman
William E. Travis