

# Commonwealth of Kentucky, DDS Offices

## Small Steps in Healthcare Automation Pay Off with Big Benefits

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Industry: Healthcare
- Claims: 100K+ DDS claims per year

### CHALLENGE

- Adhere to SSA procedures for notifying and reminding claimants of upcoming medical examination appointments
- Manage the influx of daily claimants requiring notification of upcoming medical appointments
- Provide a 7-day-a-week reminder service to manage peak volume of calls, without incurring extra headcount

### RESULT

- SSA reports created on the same day work is performed
- Reallocation of more than 4 staff members to other DDS work functions
- 7-day-a-week notification and reminder service with no additional overhead
- Greater accuracy in notifying and reminding claimants of upcoming appointments
- Improved productivity and staff member morale

### VERTICAL SOLUTION

- Wave IP
- Wave Voice Server



### Background

The benefits of automating routine tasks in healthcare with voice applications are well-known. Patients get seen or referred to a specialist faster, staff can better concentrate on in-person interactions, and everyone is more productive and happier when repetitive tasks can be removed from daily job responsibilities.

Automating a small step in the administration of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Disability Determination Service (DDS) paid off with big benefits for the Cabinet of Family & Health Services in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The DDS is a division of the Cabinet of Family & Health Services responsible for providing timely and accurate disability decisions to residents of Kentucky.

Disability determination is a prescribed process that all state governments follow in order to meet Social Security standards for timely notification. In order to provide a consistent experience regardless of state residency, the SSA has an established standard for contacting claimants throughout the determination process, which includes the scheduling of medical examinations, confirmation of appointments and appointment reminders. Since every state serves claimants with a diverse array of backgrounds and living situations, a phone call is the preferred method of contact. Four to six employees in the Kentucky DDS division were dedicated to calling new claimants with the date, time and location of their examination to evaluate their disability. These same employees also needed to call claimants with follow-up reminders for their medical exams.

Enter David Stephanski, who, as a technology manager for the Kentucky DDS division, was charged with putting his extensive IT and telephony background to work to help improve the adoption of technology by automating routine functions that weighed down the productivity and morale of the division.

"Informing claimants of their appointment and providing the reminder service prescribed by SSA was a manual process," explains Stephanski. "On days where Kentucky had a large influx of new applications, or on days after a long weekend, we would have as many as 600 calls that needed to be made in a single day. Like many government agencies, we are operating under a hiring freeze, so we can't hire more people to do the job."

“When you think about the man-hours it takes to complete 600 outgoing calls in a single day, the efficiencies we gained with the Wave Voice Server appointment reminder solution speak for themselves.”

– **David Stephanski, Technology Manager**

## Solution

For DDS, the return on investment for automating this one area of the disability determination process was painfully obvious. Stephanski was quickly appointed to lead the development of an appointment reminder solution. DDS envisioned a solution that could make outgoing notifications, provide a follow-up reminder service and report back results to the SSA's DDS case management system.

Collaborating with Vertical Communication's Professional Services staff and a local Vertical partner, Black Box, the requirements were carefully laid out to help define the functionality needed to automate the appointment notification and reminder process, and within 30 days – including a comprehensive two-week testing period – DDS was able to implement the solution.

“During the testing phase, Vertical's Professional Services staff reacted quickly to diagnose and resolve any issue we had with the appointment reminder system,” explained Stephanski, adding that during the testing period DDS received reports back showing completed calls from the appointment reminder solution as manual calls subsequently tapered off, making the cutover to the new system a seamless process.

## Results

The appointment reminder solution leveraging the Wave Voice Server platform has been in operation for more than six months at Kentucky DDS.

“Since we implemented the solution, it has been operating seven days a week without any problems,” reports Stephanski. “When you think about the man-hours it takes to complete 600 outgoing calls in a single day, the efficiencies we gained with the Wave Voice Server appointment reminder solution speak for themselves.”

Once the appointment reminder solution was fully implemented into the DDS process, staff members could be redeployed to their original position or into new areas supporting DDS administration. Other benefits include greater accuracy on appointment notification received by claimants and improved reporting capabilities for the SSA.

“Each state has their own DDS organization and we all follow the same process, connect to the same AS400 infrastructure and integrate with the same SSA disability determination case management system,” explains Stephanski. “The appointment

reminder system is a proven solution that can be easily replicated by any state DDS organization that wants to automate the appointment reminder service they provide. “

Given the success the Kentucky DDS has achieved with the Wave Voice Server, Stephanski is now actively engaged with his SSA counterparts in other states to develop and test a voice application to automate another series of communications that all DDS offices could use to inform claimants or business partners.

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