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Your signature will be safer with Valley-based technology

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The system 'listens' to your signature before accepting it

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PHOENIX -- New technology will soon make it easier for parents to sign their children in and out of day care centers without having to worry about security.

The technology, called SignHear, verifies signatures by 'listening' to the rhythm of a user's signature.

It was originally designed by an engineer from Rolls-Royce in Europe.

"Once they had it they said, well, here we have this signature verification technology but what do we do with it?" said Jeremy Kelstrom, ASU graduate and Chief Executive Officer of Arizona Security Inc.

Rolls-Royce then decided to partner with American universities that would have a better understanding of the market.

A team of Arizona State University graduates won a reverse business competition held by Rolls-Royce, ASU and SkySong, giving them the rights to the license for this technology.

The team, Arizona Security Inc., decided to try the technology out in a day-care center where parents were continuously using their signature.

"When we initially looked at the child care market the main benefit we saw to bring was to bring enhanced security for the parents' piece of mind," Kelstrom said. "We wanted to have a natural progression from using signatures on paper to just going to our device."

The device is easy to use, and if approved by state agencies, will allow for day-care centers to use a completely automated system.

"They'll just sign in, it takes just a few seconds and then it will either say you're accepted or you're not accepted," Kelstrom said.

To enroll a signature in the system, each parent at the day-care signs their name five times on the device to create a template.

"So it's looking at variations in your signatures and it's technically listening to the sound of your signature," Kelstrom said.

The parent then enters in a pin code designed specifically to their name.

That will bring up their signature template and will be looking to verify their current signature versus that template.

After a few seconds, the SignHear device will determine if the correct person is signing the child in or out.

"We see a strong benefit to parents because they really can have peace of mind -- individuals can't be coming in to just sign their kids out that they are not authorized to do," Kelstrom said. "So this is an additional layer of security for parents so they can really feel that there's an added security benefit for them."

Parents with more than one child will be able to sign all of their children in at the same time, instead of having to flip through papers like they used to.

The system will also free up about 20 hours a month day-care employees spend on paperwork.

"That allows us to do more in-class training with teachers," said Debbie Frere, owner of Explorers in Learning day-care center. "It allows us to do more curriculum implementation, and it just allows us to offer a much better quality of service to our parents."

As for parents, it is just another step to determine the safety of their children.

"It's the best feeling in the world," said Edna Cribb. "I mean you want your children to be loved when they're in school, you want them to be cared for and you want them to learn, but you absolutely want to know that they're safe."

Arizona Security Inc. is looking for sponsors to help them provide this device to day-cares free of charge.

They plan on having this technology in about 200 day-care centers across the Valley by September, and possibly bring it to the banking system later on.

For more information on SignHear, visit azsecurityinc.com.

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