

## **Police Body Cameras: The Essentials**

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### Research:

- Learn the fundamentals
- Become familiar with the latest technologies
- Check out the buyers' guides: <https://www.policeone.com/police-products/body-cameras/articles/48339006-Download-PoliceOnes-Free-2016-Guide-to-Police-Body-Worn-Cameras/>

### Planning:

- Set goals and objectives and identify desired outcomes
- BJA planning guide  
<https://www.bja.gov/bwc/pdfs/BWCImplementationChecklist.pdf>
- Consider how body cameras fit into the larger scheme of video surveillance, such as in-car video and community pole cameras
- Assess the costs – will you set the budget first and then plan according to your means, or will you establish your plan and then seek funding via grants and budget adjustments? <https://www.policegrantshelp.com/products/Body-Cameras/>
- Identify key stakeholders and establish a communications and engagement plan – who will influence the decision making process? How will you get the community's support?
- Make sure the planning process takes the law enforcement agency's resources and personnel into consideration – involve them in the fact-finding process
- Find and/or develop your subject matter experts and put them in charge of research and project management

### Collaboration:

- Assess how your police department works with other LE agencies in the area – coordinate with them to ensure a seamless implementation later on. This applies to equipment purchasing, policy development and deployment
- Involve stakeholders who are affected directly by the implementation plan, i.e., schools, businesses, Commonwealth's Attorney, etc.
- Build work groups

### Define Policies and Key Protocols:

- Review policies of adjacent agencies and state and national model policies
- Virginia model policy -  
[https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/law-enforcement/files/model-policy/body\\_worn\\_camera\\_model\\_policy.docx](https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/law-enforcement/files/model-policy/body_worn_camera_model_policy.docx)
- Policies must be customized to the community based on officer deployment, targeted uses, law enforcement resources and Commonwealth's Attorney input
- Officer deployment, video capture, records retention, redaction, viewing, audit control and public release must be determined before launching a body camera program

- Critical to involve the Commonwealth's Attorney and local government attorney in policy and protocol development and review

#### Define the Technology Solution:

- Use your technology experts to review equipment specs and vendors
- Determine impact on existing records management and CAD systems
- Make sure you plan for the short term, the long term and the possible exit plan
- Coordinate with other area agencies to see if you can come together on a purchasing solution
- Determine technology roles – who will make determinations about redaction and masking of certain video elements
- Have to have an overall, comprehensive plan for selecting and purchasing cameras, providing for equipment maintenance and having a data storage plan (on-site servers vs cloud based storage with or separate from equipment vendor)
- Make sure the training component for officers and equipment managers is incorporated into overall plan
- Develop a public education strategy

#### Rollout and Implementation

- Before you launch, train the officers
- Launch public education campaign with feedback component
- Consider a pilot approach with a subset of the police department to test the equipment, training, policies and protocols and coordination with key stakeholders
- Establish a constant monitoring and assessment process
- Recognize when the plan is not functioning well, and have a plan in place for how the program will be revamped
- Stay current with state and federal laws and court decisions that may impact how the cameras are used, and how, when and if the video can or should be released publicly

#### Busting Some Myths:

- A camera doesn't see what the officer sees, or how he sees
- Not all context clues are caught by the camera – example: tactile clues
- Camera speed can't match speed of life – some millisecond detail is lost
- Cameras may see better than people do in low light – decisions are affected by conditions
- The officer's body may block the camera's view
- A camera only records in two dimensions – can't capture depth of field
- Camera time-stamping is not accurate to the millisecond
- One camera only captures part of the story
- Cameras can fill in the blanks – but also encourages second-guessing, which isn't realistic
- Cameras never replace thorough investigations
- Cameras aren't the solution – they are an aid to the solution
- Remember – what a camera collects is evidence, and needs to be treated as such