



Peer Exchange Guide: Body-Worn Cameras

Agencies interested in learning more about body-worn cameras may find it helpful to visit an agency with an established program in a peer learning opportunity. This document serves as a peer exchange sample guide that includes suggested agenda topics, example objectives, potential outcomes, and additional resources.

In 2016, 22 states and the District of Columbia considered body-worn camera (BWC) legislation and twenty-five states in total have created laws for BWCs.¹ As of August 2016, 43 major city departments in the United States have body-worn camera programs with policies in place.² The video and audio recordings from BWCs can be used by law enforcement to demonstrate transparency, increase accountability, and improve community relations. They can also be used to enhance evidence collection efforts, improve officer training and evaluation, deter inappropriate or illegal behaviors by both law enforcement and the public, and protect against false allegations for all parties.³ Body worn cameras can be used to build mutual trust and as part of a larger community-engagement strategy. Available research consistently shows that officer BWCs contribute to a substantial and significant reduction in complaints against law enforcement officers.⁴

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and Bureau of Justice Assistance launched the BWC Pilot Implementation Project (PIP) in Fiscal Year 2015 to assist law enforcement agencies with the enhancement or implementation of BWC initiatives. The PIP provided funding to 73 police agencies in 2015 and 106 public safety agencies in 2016.⁵

The department now feels “greatly prepared with an outline of very critical aspects of usage and implementation.”

—Metro Nashville Police Department officer who attended a peer exchange for BWCs

Agencies interested in implementing a BWC program have a wide array of aspects to consider. Some of these items include camera assignment, data storage, financial impact and maintenance, what kinds of activities will be recorded, training, and program evaluation.⁶ Though there are numerous positive aspects of BWC programs, agencies also need to be prepared to consider privacy concerns for both officers and citizens, public access, officers’ safety, and re-victimization to ensure that victim reporting does not decrease as a result of BWCs.

Body-Worn Cameras

Sample Agenda Items

- Tour data storage facility/room
- Examine concept, development, and implementation of BWC program
- Meet with area command to discuss patrol perspective, assignments, and daily execution
- Share policy requirements, how policy violations are addressed, and union challenges
- Discuss budget considerations and financial impact
- Discuss benefits of partnerships with university/stakeholders, strategies for addressing community concerns, and processes for records requests from citizens
- Address what a BWC training curriculum for officers should include
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Question and Answer session

Sample Objectives

- Discuss policy-related requirements, implementation processes, and training for deployment of BWC
- Learn about deployment and physical maintenance protocols such as camera storage, security requirements, and deployment check-in/out process
- Explore staff training practices and requirements for implementation and maintenance of BWC program
- Understand the benefits and drawbacks to different video storage and camera types, and video editing software
- Understand the necessary funding required to start and maintain a BWC program

Potential Outcomes

- Propose a budget for a BWC program
- Modify existing practices or implement new practices, policies, training, or procedures based on lessons learned
- Decide on the best camera or video storage type for agency needs
- Improved relationships between police and community
- Increased transparency/accountability
- Less officer complaints
- More timely and irrefutable evidence collection

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Additional Resources

- BWC Training and Technical Assistance
- Implementing a BWC Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned
- BWC Toolkit
- BJA BWC Podcast Series
- BWC Scorecard
- Orlando Police Department/USF Body Camera Study
- National Conference of State Legislatures BWC Interactive Graphic
- NIJ Research on BWCs and Law Enforcement
- Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras: Assessing the Evidence
- 3 Phases of BWC Training



Endnotes

1. <https://www.bja.gov/bwc/Topics-NationalLandscape.html>
2. <https://www.bwccscorecard.org/>
3. <https://www.bja.gov/bwc/topics-gettingstarted.html>
4. <https://www.nationalpublicsafetypartnership.org/clearing-house/Content/ResourceDocuments/Implementing%20a%20Body-Worn%20Camera%20Program.pdf>
5. <http://bwcccta.com/bwc-sites>
6. https://www.bja.gov/bwc/pdfs/LasVegasMetro_PD-BWC-Policy-Current.pdf