



INSIGHTS

THE SMALL RURAL TRIBAL BODY-WORN CAMERA PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

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NOTE:

In November and December 2023 the SRT BWC TTA program conducted a three-part webinar series based on Body-Worn Camera Policies and Procedures: Guidelines for Prosecutors. This newsletter provides a brief summary of Part 1 of that series. The 30-minute webinars and accompanying documents are available [HERE](#).

The Importance of BWC Policy Guidelines for Prosecutors

Elected district attorneys face numerous challenges and issues when dealing with crime, victims, and defendants. Video from body-worn cameras (BWCs) provides the prosecutor with a useful tool for evidentiary purposes. Shared below are some thoughts to help understand the value of footage as well its limitations and constraints.

Why prosecutors need a policy

A written policy provides assurances to the public that the elected district attorney will approach each case involving BWC footage in a systematic and equal way. A written policy informs the public of what to expect from the elected attorney and court system.

Internally, guidelines lay out the expectations of assistant attorneys when using BWC footage. Details include:

- what footage needs to be reviewed and by whom,
- what reviewers are looking for, and
- how to prioritize video review.

Assistant prosecutors also need guidance on what to do if they come across problematic behavior from police captured on BWC footage.

Further, assistants and prosecutors need clear guidance regarding discovery expectations. Overall, the guidelines cover a variety of topics including:

- victim and witness safety issues,
- redaction,
- retention,
- case outcomes,
- transcripts,
- jury instructions and
- how they all relate to BWC footage

Discretion and the prosecutor

The prosecutor guidelines on BWC footage are written so that each agency can answer a variety of questions on their own. It does not prescribe or mandate policies, but instead illustrates issues prosecutors should consider. Final policy decisions are up to the elected prosecutor. In writing the guidelines, the authors were aware that each prosecutor's jurisdiction is unique.

The guidelines are written in a way that recognizes the differences among offices and can help large, small, and rural offices. The guidelines help to scale a policy for any size office and will help alleviate the administrative work of creating a policy from scratch.

ASK BOB



ASK MIKE



QUESTIONS?

The SRT program created two blogs to answer questions about BWCs. "Ask Bob" features Commissioner Bob Haas (ret. Cambridge Police Department) and "Ask Mike" features Mike Green, former prosecutor in Monroe County, NY and Deputy Commissioner for the Division of Criminal Justice Services in New York State.

Send questions to Bob [HERE](#)
Send questions to Mike [HERE](#)



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