What You Need to Know: Planning Your Body Camera Program

When deploying body camera programs, departments must address fundamental questions such as: Who will use the cameras? When, where and how can they be used? What type of video management system (VMS) makes the most sense? Answering these questions will help you determine which technology best suits your needs and help predict a program budget.

Other questions to answer:

- If there are fewer cameras than officers, how will assignments be prioritized?

- Will cameras be worn only by patrol officers or also by plainclothes officers, detectives, supervisors, reserve officers and citizen volunteers?

- What accessories and ancillary equipment will officers and supervisors need?

- How will the department keep and manage an inventory of spare cameras, batteries and related items?

- How many different types of video sources will the department need to manage?

CHECKLIST:

✓ Consider what capabilities and features the cameras offer. For instance, the Department of Homeland Security recommends body cameras should have an image resolution of at least 640x480 pixels, a frame rate of at least 25 frames per second and a battery that lasts a minimum of 3 hours.

✓ List the elements necessary for the complete camera solution, including batteries, docking stations, cases and lenses.

✓ Think about who will manage the tasks of camera assignment, maintenance and replacement.

✓ Specify the various sources and types of video files the department will need to manage, including vehicle cameras, street surveillance cameras, building security video and cell phone video submitted by citizens.

✓ Determine how the VMS will support the video access and review needs of different users involved in investigation and prosecution activities. For instance, does the VMS retain the video in its original format to ensure it can be used for evidentiary purposes?

✓ Consider an open-platform VMS to support multiple camera types and video sources. An open system also allows a department to associate video files from multiple sources to a single case file for handoff to the prosecutor's office.

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