

Transcript: Body-Worn Camera Programs— Law Enforcement Perspective

Lauretta Hill, Deputy Police Chief, Miami Beach Police Department: The advice I would give mid-sized agencies for a body cam program is to go slow. There is a lot of information out there about body-worn cameras, but there is no national best practice in place yet, so I would suggest that they go very slow. That they partner with the state attorney's office, the district attorney's office, the public defenders, other law enforcement agencies that have implemented body cameras to find out what works best for their agency. And as they draft a policy, be reminded that policy will probably evolve based on practical experiences that they have on the streets when they deploy the body cameras.

Miami Beach has a very diverse community and a diverse population, so in our implementation and roll-out of body cameras, we have met and continue to meet with all the—all of the population of Miami Beach, for them to understand exactly what the program is and what it is not, and to understand any special considerations that we need to take into account in the draft of our policy, and also continue to engage them throughout the deployment of the cameras to see if there needs to be any change in our policy on how we deal with and serve the diverse community.

One of the first things we did in rolling out our pilot program is to contact our state's attorney's office to understand exactly what it is that they needed from our body cam project, and the evidence and how it would be collected. There are other agencies within the county that have also rolled out body cameras, so we have a working group to understand what the challenges are of collecting evidence and submitting evidence to the state attorney's office. So within that working group, we're trying to develop a best practice policy for all municipalities as they come on board with body camera, on how we will collect the evidence and then submit it to the state attorney's office.

We've partnered with Dr. Barak Ariel to study our body cam project, and one of the things we want to do in addition to the Rialto Study—which covered use of force incidents, complaints against officers, time on call—we want to determine if we gain operational efficiency by deployment of the camera, are there operational realities that it's taken longer to collect the evidence because of deploying of the camera. And also, we want to test to see if the cases that we're submitting to our state's attorney's office, if the cases are better cases, the prosecution rates—so a few more things we want to do with our partnership with Dr. Barak Ariel.

If we were to start our body-worn camera project over again today, we would go even more—even slower to make sure that we included all our partners from the state attorney's office, defense, the DA's office, the community we serve, and other law enforcement agencies to understand what the best practices are, any hurdles, any unforeseen things that may come up, but to implement it very slowly and not deploy the cameras without doing the proper research prior to. So that would be the advice that I have if we were to start today, is to make sure that we check all of those boxes to make sure that we've looked at how other agencies have deployed the cameras and what we can learn from that to gain any operational efficiencies in our deployment of cameras.