

**BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance**  
**Lt. Craig Shute-Rowan University Police**

(Lauren Gonzalez): Hello, this is (Lauren Gonzalez), a member of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body Worn Camera Team and today I'm speaking with Lt. Craig Shute, part of the Rowan University Police Department. Lt. Shute has had over 25 years of experience at the Rowan University Police Department, one of the first New Jersey colleges to implement a body worn camera program. Launched in April of 2015, Rowan University's public safety leaders decided to institute the body camera program for its 34 first responding officers. The body worn camera program is a five year, \$95,000 investment for the department and it has already received a very positive response from the student body.

Lt. Shute, thank you for speaking with us today.

Lt. Craig Shute: Hello.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Hello, well let's just get started. Recently there has been a lot of debate about having body worn cameras on a school campus, what led Rowan University specifically to adopt that program?

Lt. Craig Shute: Actually, it was several incidents involving the professional standard section which I'm in charge of, complaints against officers and officers stating that if they had cameras or if there were cameras in the areas that the story would be told and that they would – the community would be able to see what actually occurred out there. Also, New Jersey was actually looking at implementing a law for all police departments either to have dash cams or body worn cameras, so we felt that to protect our officers and to be able to have a transparency that we would go ahead and research the body worn camera program.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Got you, can you explain the biggest difference you have seen between local and municipal police departments and university police departments in terms of implementation?

Lt. Craig Shute: Actually it's funny; I don't think there's really any difference. We all do the same thing, we're all out there researching what best works for the agency, I think that we want the community to be aware of what we're doing and why we're doing it. And yes, obviously our university is a little smaller than the town surrounding us, but we have visitors, we have the faculty staff, we have the employees of the campus and they all take part of this university so it's good let them know what's going on out there.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Absolutely. What is the level of involvement that university administrators have in making decisions around body worn cameras specifically when it comes to policy implementation?

Lt. Craig Shute: Well, the great part about this is, our leadership, our administration we have in the university setting the lieutenant is the highest law enforcement officer with our department, so we have a senior director and a assistant vice president. When I brought this program to them I told them that I was looking to put body worn cameras on our officers, the senior director a retired police officer and was really supportive of the program, we were able to reach out to a local police department (east sham town) meet with the lieutenant who walked us through it.

And as we started researching and looking at other products out there we started realizing as a nationally accredited department that we had to have policies and procedures, and we realized really quick that there wasn't a lot out there for body worn cameras at the time and that we were going to have to take a municipal department policy procedure and look at our (depolicies) and rewrite. And they were a great support, they helped us, they assisted us with wording, we looked at what was best for the university and the department to move forward with the policies and how to implement them.

And basically they gave me an open checkbook and said, let's do this. So it was a really good and really supportive behind this.

(Lauren Gonzalez): That's great, did you see any partnerships with research professors or was it really strictly with the university administration that you worked with?

Lt. Craig Shute: It was actually strictly with the university administration, we did put it out there to professors once we knew what product we were going to go with and we didn't want to let the university see it before we implemented it. But as far as the policies, the procedures, we obviously ran it through our legal department once we had a final draft.

We gave it to our legal department so they could look at it and review it and if there was any changes that they would want to put in there. And there were some ideas that they had or felt should've been changed and there's some areas of every day operation that we felt that we wanted to stay in the firm on because the wording was really there to protect everybody involved. It's just not to protect the officers; it's to protect the citizens as well.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Yes absolutely, I would say that a lot of researchers have found that definitely establishes a sense of public trust when you have that level of technology incorporated. So it's good to see that you found that as well. What are some unique factors police departments need to consider when implementing a body worn camera program in college campuses specifically?

Lt. Craig Shute: It's funny, when we first started the program and we put the cameras on the officers, the officers were super supportive as they are still to this day. A lot of the officers would not want to go out on the road without their cameras, they just say they feel helpless without them now because now they actually can show what occurs out there. But when looking at a university you start thinking about dormitories and the right to privacy, if the officers are doing foot patrol and the way our policies are written, any interaction with a student or faculty staff member or pedestrian, if it's a – looks like it's going to become a criminal justice purpose to (draw just) have the cameras on. Now, they have the right down the road to label them differently but you have to think about (exportation) to privacy.

The second one was sexual assaults; does a victim feel comfortable talking to an officer? Especially knowing that what she or he is saying is being videoed. So we do certain things, sometimes if it's a sexual assault the officers will make a decision, the supervisor will make a decision, hello, we're going to announce that we have a body worn camera, do you want to talk to us? And if

the victim feels that they don't want to talk via camera the officers will state on the radio (I'm) going to be shutting off my body worn camera, and we'll turn the camera off. It's documented (why)? But it gives the victim that confidentiality as well.

So there's some of the issues that you don't think about when you first put the program out there but then as you explore the campus, but trust me, every person in a separate section of a campus will want their own agenda for the cameras. So you have to stay firm with what you believe is best for the uniformity and the protection of evidence.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Absolutely, we actually had an episode previously where we just spoke with the director of children's program and a lot of those issues of privacy and terms of sexual assault cases came up. And so it's an interesting point that should be noted.

Lt. Craig Shute: Well here's another thing you don't think about a police officer, if we deal with a subject that's transported under arrest to a hospital and you go into the hospital. A lot of hospital staff did not like the cameras because of (HIPAA) violations and they feel that it's an invasion of privacy. So you have to think are you there and what are you recording? So you let the doctors and the staff know for legal purposes we're only recording this, medical stuff we'll step out of the room. So there's some issues that way.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Yes, are these questions or specific cases of privacy? Is this something that's in your policy that's covered in the policy or do you find this more as standard practice and incorporate it in the training?

Lt. Craig Shute: Actually, we started this back in April 2015 and we actually just revisited our policies to make sure that we felt still comfortable. We have a section in our policy which allows the officers just like when dealing with a victim of sexual assault, that if they're in a hospital or somewhere and they have to shut the camera off, they can notify headquarters. But to be honest with you, after the first couple months of the officers wearing the cameras and a lot of the agencies around us, local departments started going to the cameras, the hospitals are now understanding of what the camera is recording.

I believe that they thought we were going to be there recording their personal records, the treatments and everything else that the subjects – once they realized that we're only there to make sure that they're safe, it's becoming better. So we haven't really adjusted the policies as far as that's concerned.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Absolutely, what do you see as some of the benefits of implementing a body worn camera program in a university setting?

Lt. Craig Shute: What are some of the benefits? To be honest with you, transparency. The university when I first put it out there and we did a press release prior but when we put it out there for the university staff, the faculty staff and the students to see, they welcome it with open arms and why? It's because now when something happens, they can actually go through the (over) request and see the video if it's releasable. And especially for the (dean of student's) office or the judicial affairs office, when something happens you just don't have one point of view. If we have three or four police officers out at the scene you have three or four different views of what's going on.

So the great part of these cameras is that you're getting to see everything. And it's also, and I'll give you a little funny story, an officer rescued a family of ducks, little baby ducklings out of a sewer drain. Well we put it on our Facebook and it went viral, it just shows a very small, simple part of what police officer does daily that nobody knows about. But it opens the community to see really what happens and especially on a university, all the family members, staffs, students, they all have this picture that when school's done the campus shuts down, they don't realize that there's all kind of events that happen on campuses across America.

And now when they see the videos they see what the university police are actually doing out here and what police officers are encountering every day, and it really opens their eye to what's going on on the campus and why there's a need for law enforcement on campus to (this days).

(Lauren Gonzalez): Absolutely, I can see a lot of positive (externalities) with that, absolutely. Now, if you were going to start your program body worn cameras all over

from the beginning, based on what you've learned what would you do differently?

Lt. Craig Shute: I'd avoid the program, no just joking. To be honest with you I think the biggest thing was we were so excited to get the cameras, and to get them implemented, we did give ourselves about two months to get the cameras in, to get the officers basically trained. I think the biggest thing that we would do over would be to extend the training, just to get the officers more comfortable, and what I mean by that is every camera program, we looked at – we researched about five body worn cameras. We then actually did test and evaluates on three cameras, actually brought them out their companies and had our officers wear them for a set amount of days, 30 days.

And we had the officers write summaries of what they felt about each camera. The camera we decided to go with was a taser but it was the back end of the camera, the protection of evidence, the how they get access to videos, they can not destroy the videos. That tail end of the video is really important and the training that went into that? We don't believe that we gave the officers a good amount of time to fully understand the program and that's something – I mean, when you're looking at these cameras that you realize, it's just not a recording device on your chest or on your shoulder, it's when you come back to the backside and you download that evidence, how are you then going to store that evidence?

How are you going to protect that evidence and how are you going to have it available for discovery or for you officers to review when they're writing their reports?

(Lauren Gonzalez): Absolutely, that's a great point. I think that body worn cameras now are such a hot topic that a lot of departments are very eager to just go straight into the implementation phase when a lot more needs to be done beforehand.

Lt. Craig Shute: Well that's what – like I said, we felt really strongly about was the protection of the evidence at the tail end, the retention period, how long we have to set for the retention of each different category. How you can categorize the evidence so if it's a (motor vehicle stop), is a motor vehicle crash, is it a

sexual assault, is it an investigation? What are you going to have for retention period? None of the officers here can delete anything, there's only one person who can delete that and that's the administrator to the system.

And due to retention periods it allows us to have the video until it hits maximum retention of that category and then it deletes itself.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Right, very interesting points. Well, thank you so much Lt. Shute, we're very grateful that you could speak with us today.

Lt. Craig Shute: I appreciate the opportunity, thank you.

(Lauren Gonzalez): Absolutely, well we encourage law enforcement, justice and public safety leaders who's agencies are interested in learning more about the implementation of body worn camera programs to visit the body worn camera toolkit at [www.bja.gov/bdc](http://www.bja.gov/bdc). This tool kit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help with adoption and use for community engagement, policy development, data collection, officer training and educational purposes. We also encourage listeners to share and promote these resources with your colleagues and staff. Lastly, all of these resources and the body worn camera toolkit have been designed as a national resource, your resource.

Please submit your ideas for new content through the (BWC) support link at the bottom of the home page. This is (Lauren Gonzalez) of the bureau of justice assistance body worn camera team signing off. Thank you to our listeners for joining us today.

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