

What Is A Body-Worn Camera?

A body-worn camera (BWC) is an electronic camera system often worn by members of law enforcement that records interactions between community members and police officers.

Why Are Body Worn Cameras Necessary?

BWCs, when implemented properly, can increase transparency in and accurately document interactions between police and community members. BWCs can also deter unprofessional, illegal, or inappropriate behaviors, thus protecting both police and community members. BWCs can be a positive tool for both police and communities — in addition to the protections that they can offer community members who encounter police, BWCs also can be used to validate an officer's actions when they are incorrectly accused of misconduct.

If HB 195 passed and is now law, why must the Council on Police Training create new regulations?

BWCs are only as good as the policies put in place to ensure they live up to their potential as a tool for increased police transparency and accountability. HB 195 requires that police officers and other employees of the Department of Correction wear BWCs, but the bill did not create uniform standards around when those cameras should be turned on, how and for how long the footage is stored, or when BWC footage can be released to the public.

What Are Elements of A Good Body-Worn Camera Policy?

First, BWCs should be activated whenever a police officer is responding to a call for service or at the initiation of any other investigative encounter between a police officer and a member of the public.

Second, to ensure accountability, any officer that fails to adhere to the recording requirements must have appropriate disciplinary action taken against them — regardless of any contrary provisions in state open record laws, like Delaware's Law Enforcement-Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBOR).

Third, footage that captures police use of force or is the subject of a police complaint must be released to the public — regardless of any contrary provisions in state open record laws, like Delaware's Law Enforcement-Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBOR). *Spending millions on technology because of its promise to build trust between communities and police, but not requiring departments to use them in ways that will actually build trust, would not only squander taxpayer money but also waste a valuable opportunity to change the dynamic of policing in Delaware.*