

## **BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance Wilmington Police Department & Urban Institute**

Chip Coldren: Hello, I'm Chip Coldren. I serve as the Managing Director for Justice Programs at CNA in the Safety and Security division and as Project Director for the Bureau of Justice Assistance body worn camera training and technical assistance program.

Today, I'm speaking with Lieutenant (Cecilia Ashe) of the Wilmington, Delaware police department. We wanted to speak with her about the departments' pilot program with body worn cameras. Lieutenant (Ashe) started her law enforcement career in 1996 with the Arlington County Police Department in Virginia.

In her 9 1/2 years with Arlington, she was assigned to a variety of units, most notably the executive protection of the President of the United States, and other dignitary officials. During her time with Arlington Country, she received numerous commendations, with the most significant being the Meritorious Action Award for her actions during the terrorist attack of the Pentagon on September 11, 2001.

Lieutenant (Ashe) moved to Delaware and joined the Wilmington Department of Police in September 2006, where she served as the Class Commander for the Wilmington 91st police academy. In her 10 years of service years, she has worked in many divisions within the police department, serving in the uniformed services division as a patrolman, and later being transferred to the community police unit.

Prior to her being promoted to the rank of Sergeant, she was assigned to the criminal investigations division, where she served as a Detective in the major crimes unit, as well as specializing in crimes against children and child death investigations. Once promoted to the rank of Sergeant, she was assigned to the Special Operations division. Lieutenant (Ashe) supervised the school resource officers unit, emergency services unit and the Mayor's protection detail.

Under the leadership of Chief Bobby Cummings, Lieutenant (Ashe) was selected in August 2014 as the first in the department's history to serve as the aide to the Chief. As the Chief's aide, Lieutenant (Ashe) was tasked with many projects and assignments, most notably working as a department's liaison for the Violence Reduction Network to the Department of Justice.

Some of her most significant projects were the implementation of the department's first body worn camera pilot program and the establishment of a real-time crime center. The real-time crime center is the first not only for the department, but also the first of its kind for the state of Delaware.

In April 2016, Lieutenant (Ashe) was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant where she currently serves as the Commander of the real-time client center, as well as the 911 Communications Center and technology services unit.

Lieutenant (Ashe), thank you for speaking with me today. To start with, please tell us about the size of your police department and the size of the pilot study project. How many cameras and how many officers are involved?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Well, thank you so much Chip for inviting me into this podcast today. Currently, the department, our authorized strength is 319 officers. Our current strength that we're at is about 309 as of earlier this month. Currently in the program, we have 20 officers that are assigned to the program, and currently we have 17 cameras deployed out on the streets of Wilmington. The city is broken into three various sectors and the cameras are deployed throughout the city, in all of the various sectors of the city.

Chip Coldren: So, are you looking at different types of cameras in this pilot?

Lieutenant (Ashe): We are. Basically we started this – this is probably been a year of research for me before we actually implemented the pilot program and in doing that, we started it in about February and we're testing a variety of products. And with that, the product that we're trying to test is our server-based product, as well as cloud-based products, so that we can get a full analysis on those types of systems.

Chip Coldren: Very good. What specifically do you hope to learn from the project? What are the main questions you want to answer?

Lieutenant (Ashe): I think for us, going into this, we knew that with the 21st Century policing study, that looking at the various (six) pillars, we wanted to improve our trust in our community and provide more transparency. I think in the system we're looking at, not only protecting our officers, but also ensuring that we're giving the community that transparency of what we do every day, and also trying to reduce use of force incidents.

Last year alone, we answered over 98,000 calls for service in the city of Wilmington and we're approximately 16 square miles. So with that, we wanted to look at how can we serve the community better? And then also, how can we reduce our use of force and assaults on police officers are our main concern

Chip Coldren: Very good, thank you. Can you tell us what prompted your department to move in the direction of body worn cameras in the first place?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Again, I think it's looking at the results from President Obama and the 21st Century policing task force. I think going over those things, we want to improve our relationships with the community, but we also want to do better documentation of incidents, things along the lines. But basically, just embracing this 21st Century policing philosophy that is really starting to not only shape our Police Department, but shape law enforcement across the United States.

Chip Coldren: Thank you. So, could you tell us a few more details about how this pilot study is designed? How long will it run? What kind of data and measures are you looking at and what outcomes do you expect?

Lieutenant (Ashe): So for us, we're probably going to be running the program for approximately 12 months. We determined that was the best amount of time for us to be able to facilitate getting a wide variety of the results that we want to be able to collect data on. So with that being said, we are in our phase two portion of the pilot program, where we're testing various camera products as I

indicated, we're doing a cost analysis which is one of the measurement tools of server-based versus cloud-based.

One of the other things that we discovered is being in the State of Delaware; we're a very small State. So we are a State of three counties and our Attorney Generals office, we're working in collaboration with them to come up with the best practices for a state-wide approach, so that we're all operating off of the same policies and procedures.

And theoretically, we would like to see us kind of all operating, not off of the same vendor so to speak, but a similar product, whether it's cloud-based or server-based so that we have consistency in prosecution and evidence. So, it's a collaborative effort across the state with the Attorney General's office and the various Police Departments that are trying these products.

For us, for data measures we're looking at have we reduced use of forces, have we reduced assaults on police officers and other data measurements as far as that's concerned. And then just the overall feel in the community of how they feel about the body worn cameras, and then the officers of course and their opinions on the program.

Chip Coldren: So, what's the status of your study right now? Is it about almost halfway through?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Yes, we're close to halfway. We're going to probably have a total of four phases; we are on our second product now, which is a server-based product. We've met with different vendors, so we're hoping to wrap it up by -- my idea would be December of 2016 with the results coming out no later than January or February.

Chip Coldren: OK, thank you. Have there been any challenges to conducting the pilot project that you'd like to share with our listeners?

Lieutenant (Ashe): I think the largest challenge is, of course, the financial burden that are placed on police departments across the country. I think the other major burden that we're dealing with is just the understanding of the community to

know that this is not a typical program that you can just purchase equipment and deploy it on the street.

This is very unique technology that you have to have strong policies and procedures in place to ensure that we're doing it correctly and protecting the privacy of citizens, protecting the privacy of victims' rights and also, protecting the privacy of the officers. So I think that's been the biggest challenges, not implementing this immediately, but actually doing the research behind it before you put them out on the street.

Chip Coldren: So, I'd like to ask you a couple of questions about what you've learned so far, if that's OK?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Absolutely.

Chip Coldren: How have the officers reacted to the cameras?

Lieutenant (Ashe): You know, surprisingly I went into this and I thought we're going to get that traditional response from police, that this is just the big brother watching us and this is a way that the Administration is going to get us in trouble. But surprisingly, we went into it, we asked for volunteers, I was shocked at the number. We, as I indicated, had 20 officers volunteer to wear these cameras and they absolutely love it, in the sense that they really feel like it protects them.

I'll give you one small incident. We had an officer I think was wearing the camera probably two or three days into the pilot program and was accused of stealing this woman's purse. The officer – and it's in our policy that we let citizens know that they're being recorded, and he reminded her, ma'am you are being audibly and visually recorded by a body worn camera. She recanted her statement saying that maybe her sister took the purse.

So, these guys love it in that sense, that they really feel like it does protect them against these false allegations, and of course that's another measurement tool that we'll look at is has it reduced the complaints on police. I feel like the citizens view it in a positive manner. It actually gives us a very good tool to engage in conversation with the community is what the officers are coming

back and saying. So, I think as far as that's concerned, that's been very surprising as well.

Chip Coldren: OK. What would you say about the community's reaction to the cameras?

Lieutenant (Ashe): We're going to end up – I'm going to be in discussions with Chief Cummings about putting together a survey for the different sectors, to be able to evaluate what their reaction has been and in a more anonymous format. But from everything that I've heard they're positive about it, and it really has helped us as well in kind of the procedural justice to things of showing that we do have a process to things and that these officers take these steps to these processes.

I think now we have to move towards the goal of being transparent and having those videos I think that really does help clear up questions that citizens may have in particular incidents.

Chip Coldren: So that leads me to my next question, which is if you're working with a research partner to evaluate this or is this being done internally?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Currently, we're doing it internally. As I indicated, I am going to be in discussions with Chief Cummings at our halfway point to start looking at research partners to do the overall evaluation of the community and see if that is something that he would be interested in doing.

Chip Coldren: OK, good. That's a good idea. I hope he's supportive of it.

I'd like to talk just for a minute about the measures you were mentioning for the pilots. I know you're looking at use of force incidents and you're looking at community reactions, I presume you're also looking at complaints against officers?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Yes, absolutely. So just like I indicated with that one example, we are going to look to see – and what we're doing is we're taking the officers that are wearing the body cameras and looking at previous years to see if it has reduced their use of force, if it has reduced assaults against them, as well as looking at the component that you just spoke of.

Chip Coldren: Excellent...

Lieutenant (Ashe): I'm sorry, as far as reducing the complaints against them.

Chip Coldren: Good, thank you. I would encourage you to pay attention to that officer safety issue, as well. There's not been much research done on the impact of cameras on officer safety and we think that there would be a very positive impact on that.

Lieutenant (Ashe): Yes, and I think honestly for us to get a true sense of that, I think that we'd probably would need to look at doing a second evaluation, one for the cameras are deployed, our goal would be to deploy to our patrol division first, which is approximately about 180, 190 officers. And then kind of re-evaluate because I think it's hard to evaluate assault on police officers with 20 volunteers.

Chip Coldren: OK.

Lieutenant (Ashe): So I think overall, once we get the program up and running and get some financial backing, which is going to be our biggest battle because of the cost of these types of programs, but I think then that would be a good time to evaluate because I think you get a more accurate depiction of what's actually occurring on the streets.

Chip Coldren: Yes, absolutely. Thank you. So, one last question if I might?

Lieutenant (Ashe): Absolutely.

Chip Coldren: You've undertaken a pretty significant project here, working on it for the better part of a year; you'll probably be involved in it for three or more years. How has this – what have you learned personally and professionally from being involved in this initiative?

Lieutenant (Ashe): I think professionally, I've learned that we definitely – I think – well, let me start by saying I think the biggest aides for me in this project was the Bureau of Justice Assistance and them collaborating research material from other agencies. I used the toolkit and I've used the International Associations of Chiefs of Police. So there's a lot of good starter kits out there that I think

have really aided me in being able to start this project, which was a huge help because I didn't have to necessarily reinvent the wheel.

I think what I've learned the most from this is this is going to be a substantial, financial burden on police departments. I know especially with our agency and looking at the different vendors and the data, maintaining the data, ensuring we're transparent but also not getting overwhelmed with these FOIA requests, the freedom of information act requests and things like that, so just the legalities around body worn cameras and ensuring that we're protecting our officers' privacy rights as well has been probably the biggest thing that I've learned in all of this.

Chip Coldren: Thank you very much, (Cecilia). This has been I think a very important and informative discussion. We're grateful that you could speak with us today and share your knowledge and experiences on this important topic.

Lieutenant (Ashe): Absolutely.

Chip Coldren: We encourage law enforcement, justice and public safety leaders whose agencies are interested in learning more about the implementation of body worn camera programs to actually visit the body worn camera toolkit that (Cecelia) mentioned at [www.bja.gov/bwc](http://www.bja.gov/bwc).

This toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help with the 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 especially the body worn camera toolkit have been designed as a national resource. They are your resource. Please submit your ideas for new content through the BWC support link at the bottom of the homepage.

This is Chip Coldren of BJA's body worn camera team signing off. Thank you again (Cecilia) for your participation with us today and thank you to our listeners for joining us.



Lieutenant (Ashe): Thanks so much, Chip.

END