Professors prepare national tool kit for police use of body-worn cameras

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Criminology professors Charles Katz (left) and Michael White at a Bureau of Justice Assistance event in Washington, D.C. The pair are the primary authors of a new online tool kit for police on the use of body-worn video cameras. Credit: Bureau of Justice Assistance

Two ASU criminology and criminal justice professors are the primary authors of a new online tool kit for police departments nationwide to implement the use of body-worn video cameras. Hosted by the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, the website draws from the professors' own research and best practices adopted by police agencies worldwide.

"This tool kit provides needed infrastructure to police agencies to efficiently and effectively adopt body-worn cameras," said professor Charles Katz, director of the ASU Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety, a unit of the College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

Katz was the principal investigator of a 15-month study involving the use of body-worn cameras by Phoenix Police. It found the use of such technology led to more arrests by officers, an increase in charges filed in domestic-violence cases and a reduction in complaints against officers wearing cameras. The use of body-worn cameras also had drawbacks as it increased the amount of time officers spent on paperwork and the length of time to process a criminal case.

"One of the lessons we learned from the study was the need to have a citywide strategic plan," Katz said. "There are also training and deployment issues that must be addressed and the need for prosecutors to be equipped to process and handle video evidence."

The new online tool kit provides information for law-enforcement agencies to make informed decisions on adopting the use of officer-worn video cameras. It includes sections on research, policy, training, technology, privacy issues and creating a dialogue with community stakeholders.

"The tool kit represents a comprehensive information warehouse for police departments who choose to adopt body-worn cameras," said professor Michael White, associate director of the center. "We hope it helps agencies successfully implement a promising new technology."

White is the author of a Department of Justice analysis of studies done on body-worn cameras. He was asked by the White House to provide subject matter expertise by testifying before the president's Task Force on 21st Century Policing earlier this year.

More information: The toolkit is available online: www.bja.gov/bwc/

"Evaluating the Impact of Officer Worn Body Cameras in the Phoenix Police Department." publicservice.asu.edu/sites/de ... eb_20_2015_final.pdf

Provided by Arizona State University