

In November 2015 the Innocence Project released a report on the costs associated with recording custodial interrogations that included survey responses from over 100 law enforcement agencies in Massachusetts and Wisconsin, where the practice is required by law.<sup>1</sup> The survey found that costs are minimal—digital video cameras can be purchased for \$50 at many major retailers—and the practice can actually result in long-term savings for agencies and taxpayers.

### **Recording Interrogations = Long-Term Savings**

Recording custodial interviews can result in long-term savings that will outweigh the initial costs of implementation. In 2004, former U.S. Attorney Thomas Sullivan issued a report in which law enforcement identified the following benefits associated with the practice<sup>2</sup>:

- **Reduced court time** for officers to appear at suppression hearings;
- **Improved court efficiency** with fewer pretrial motions to suppress statements and confessions, and more guilty pleas;
- **Time savings** for officers who no longer need to review and piece together notes from interviews;
- **Reduction in lawsuits** stemming from frivolous claims of officer misconduct during custodial interviews;
- **Protection against civil settlements**, paid for with taxpayer dollars, stemming from wrongful convictions. Eddie Lowery, who was wrongfully convicted of rape in Ogden, KS because he falsely confessed to the crime, sued the police agencies involved in his case and settled with Riley County for \$7.5 million.

### **Equipment & Storage Costs**

- **Low-Cost Options:** Low-cost options for recording equipment include digital voice recorders and handheld cameras. In the Innocence Project survey, several agencies reported recording interrogations using handheld digital cameras purchased for \$50 from Best Buy.
- **High-Tech Options:** High-tech options for recording equipment include digital interview management systems that may come with cameras, microphones, recording software, and wiring. In the Innocence Project survey, the majority of responding agencies (81 percent) reported recording interviews with closed circuit camera systems in conjunction with other equipment. Prices were as low as \$500 for a closed circuit video recording system.
- **Body-Worn Cameras:** A growing number of law enforcement agencies are purchasing body-worn cameras, and in addition to capturing field interactions, many of these devices can be used to record custodial interviews. Based on inquiries made by the Innocence Project to several federally-recognized vendors, prices for body-worn cameras range from \$119.95 to \$800 per device.<sup>3</sup> For departments that do not have interview rooms equipped with recording systems, body-worn cameras – as long as they have the capacity to capture both suspect and investigator – may be a practical alternative for recording interviews.
- **Storage, Installation & Maintenance:** In the Innocence Project survey, the majority of agencies reported using computer servers (70 percent) and/or DVDs (60 percent) to store recordings. The majority of agencies said that installation was included with equipment purchases, or that the system was self-installed (71 percent). Most agencies reported no maintenance costs (63 percent).
- **Transcriptions:** Seventy percent of responding agencies said that they do not transcribe interviews, and 13 percent said that the prosecutor's office was responsible for transcriptions. Most of the agencies that did report transcribing interviews said it was done on a case-by-case basis, or when requested by the prosecutor.

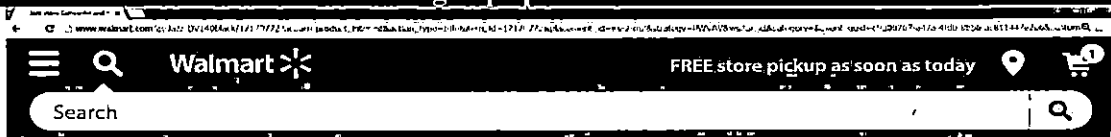
### **How Can Small Agencies Record Interrogations?**

In the Innocence Project survey 13 percent of the agencies that responded employed 10 or fewer officers, and none of these agencies reported burdensome costs associated with implementing recording interrogations. Low-cost digital video cameras are available at many major retailers and smaller agencies that prefer higher-tech options can consider sharing equipment with larger agencies. The Innocence Project survey found 22 percent of agencies have equipment-sharing agreements, and most have informal arrangements that allow local, state and federal law enforcement to use equipment as needed.

### **Funding Sources**

The responses to the Innocence Project survey revealed some creative funding sources for recording equipment. One agency purchased equipment with a grant from the manufacturer, and another with funding from their risk management association. Three agencies reported receiving private donations, and three agencies reported receiving funding from the state.

# Recording Equipment for Under \$50<sup>+</sup>



Jazz Video Camcorder and Hybrid Camera with 1.44" Hinged LCD, 4x...



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Total = \$24.23 Buying together saves you: \$1.28



**Jazz Video Camcorder.** Uses a 300k-pixel image sensor to display high-resolution images with brilliant color and precise detail. The high-resolution device also has a professional quality 4-x digital active zoom feature. This camcorder and camera comes with a 1.44" hinged LCD that allows for easy viewing. It has an SD memory card slot that can accommodate a memory card of up to 8GB, giving you enough space to store all of your favorite images. The camcorder also includes software that allows for easy video uploads to YouTube without all of the hassle. This 4-x digital zoom camera is a good choice for both novice and professionals.



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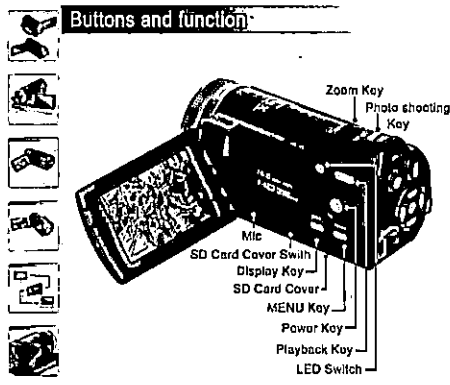
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**Vivitar Digital Camcorder:** The powerful DVR 426HD packs loads of features into easy-to-carry technology. Take this DVR everywhere and connect to the world. Record in stunning 720p resolution. Easily connect to your computer to upload saved videos and photos. The Vivitar Experience Software allows you to add special effects with the click of a mouse. It features a built-in microphone, 1.7" preview screen, and SD card memory expansion. What's included: DVR 426HD High Definition Digital Camcorder; USB Connector; AV Cable; Software CD-ROM; Wrist Strap; Quick Start Guide.

Electronics > Camera & Photo > Video > Camcorders

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