

CBP and ICE Should Improve Body-Worn Camera Program Management

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A report to congressional requesters

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What GAO Found

Body-worn cameras provide law enforcement personnel with the capability to record interactions with the public. When initiating their body-worn camera programs, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) each developed a plan that included key components of a comprehensive program management plan. However, CBP and ICE have not updated their program plans since 2022 and 2024, respectively. They have therefore not taken into account significant changes in the program, such as increases in the number of cameras scheduled for deployment and a 2025 pause in further camera deployment.

Body-Worn Camera and Functional Buttons



Source: CBP. | GAO-26-108157

CBP and ICE have stated desired results for their programs, including enhancing officer safety, transparency, accountability, and public trust. Although CBP and ICE implemented some measures to track information about camera availability and reliability, they have not implemented results-oriented performance goals and measures. Doing so would help them assess the results of their body-worn camera programs. For example, potential goals and measures might involve use of footage in use of force investigations.

CBP and ICE have established policies related to camera use and the management of footage and implemented related oversight mechanisms to help ensure compliance with policy. These include supervisory controls on camera use and monthly reviews of footage to help ensure proper categorization. However, additional controls—such as mechanisms that automatically activate the camera when a related action occurs (e.g., when emergency lights are engaged)—would provide better assurance that ICE personnel capture footage in accordance with policy.

Most CBP and ICE offices have not developed specific operational guidance that explains how personnel should use, or not use, cameras under their unique operational circumstances. The lack of guidance at this operational level increases the risk that CBP and ICE personnel will fail to use the cameras as required under policy.

Why GAO Did This Study

CBP and ICE began deploying cameras in fiscal years 2021 and 2024, respectively. As of June 2026, CBP had deployed approximately 11,500 cameras, with nearly all of these deployments to Border Patrol. As of April 2026, ICE had deployed approximately 4,800 cameras, almost evenly to Enforcement and Removal Operations and Homeland Security Investigations.

GAO was asked to review CBP and ICE's (1) body-worn camera program planning; (2) measures to assess program impact; and (3) mechanisms that help ensure that personnel carry out related responsibilities appropriately.

GAO reviewed agency documents, including Department of Homeland Security, CBP, and ICE directives on body-worn camera use. GAO also analyzed CBP and ICE data on actual and planned deployment of cameras to component personnel. GAO interviewed DHS, CBP, and ICE headquarters officials and users of the cameras at 10 field locations that vary in geographic location and status of camera deployment.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations, including that CBP and ICE each update body-worn camera program plans, implement performance goals and measures to assess effectiveness, ICE implement controls that help ensure that cameras are activated, and that CBP and ICE implement operational guidance for body-worn cameras. DHS agreed with six recommendations, but did not agree to implement automated camera activation controls. GAO maintains that implementing additional controls would help ensure adherence to ICE policy.