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State grants enable law enforcement agencies across Upstate New York to institute, expand video recording of custodial interviews

District attorney's offices in 22 counties across Upstate New York have received \$477,836 in grants that they will distribute to police departments and sheriff's offices in their jurisdictions so those agencies can institute or expand the practice of video recording interviews of suspects in custody.

Awarded by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the one-time grants will fund equipment purchase and installation; funding is made possible through the federal Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program.

This the fourth round of grants that DCJS has awarded to support video recording of custodial interrogations, which has been endorsed as a best practice by the New York State District Attorneys' Association, the New York State Sheriffs' Association and the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police. In December, those associations, along with the New York City Police Department and New York State Police, adopted statewide protocols designed to ensure the integrity of the practice. The New York State Bar Association also is a staunch advocate of the practice and has provided funding for its implementation in five counties.

All told, DCJS has invested more than \$2 million in federal Byrne JAG money to assist local law enforcement with this initiative. Recordings capture critical evidence needed in the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases and preserve information used to resolve a person's claim of innocence.

"New York State is committed to supporting initiatives that enhance the integrity of the criminal justice system," DCJS Acting Commissioner Sean M. Byrne said. "Video recording custodial interviews allows local law enforcement to preserve evidence, safeguard the rights of the accused and protect police officers from false claims. I commend police and prosecutors from agencies large and small for embracing this important public safety initiative."

These grants will allow law enforcement officials in 13 counties – Allegany, Delaware, Essex, Lewis, Montgomery, Oswego, Orleans, Putnam, Schuyler, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Wayne and Yates – to institute the practice while their colleagues in nine others – Cayuga, Chenango, Dutchess, Jefferson, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Saratoga and Westchester – will enhance existing programs.

Stephen P. Younger, president of the state Bar Association, said: "Recording an interrogation on videotape can expose a false confession – or remove doubt about the fairness of the interrogation process. In either case, justice is served."

Added Franklin County District Attorney Derek P. Champagne, who serves as president of the state District Attorneys' Association: "The District Attorneys Association of the State of New York (DAASNY) embraces the video recording of interrogations. These generous grants from DCJS will go a long way in helping to support law enforcement's efforts to install and enhance the technology needed to implement the goal of video recording interrogations."

Rensselaer County Sheriff Jack Mahar, who serves as president of the New York State Sheriffs' Association, said: "Video recording of custodial interviews creates a permanent

record of exactly what occurred, and prevents disputes about officers' conduct, the treatment of suspects and statements they made. Jurors in criminal cases will be able to see and hear a defendant's words and action for themselves, and will be able to tell when defendants are evasive, have changed their version of the incident, or are simply not forthcoming."

Added Dryden Police Chief Margaret E. Ryan, who serves as president of the Chiefs' Association: "Electronic recordings of custodial interrogations enhance the investigative process and assist in the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases. While these funds are a fraction of what is necessary to allow all agencies in the state to fully participate in this program, it greatly expands the number of agencies who are not already utilizing electronic recordings, and assists in the ability to conduct electronic recorded interrogations and allow all facets of law enforcement to work cooperatively throughout the state to enhance this public safety initiative. The New York State Association of Chiefs of Police commend the State's continued support of videotaping confessions as it not only promotes safe communities but builds the public's confidence in the criminal justice system as well."

With the awarding of these grants, 58 of the state's 62 counties will have video recording capabilities. The grant awards are as follows:

- Allegany County District Attorney's Office: \$19,519 for the Allegany County Sheriff's Office, and the Alfred, Cuba and Wellsville police departments.
- Cayuga County District Attorney's Office: \$4,915 for the Auburn Police Department.
- Chenango County District Attorney's Office: \$29,849 for the Afton, Bainbridge, Greene, New Berlin, Norwich, Oxford and Sherburne police departments and the Chenango County Sheriff's Office.
- Delaware County District Attorney's Office: \$24,980 for the Colchester, Delhi, Hancock, Sidney and Walton police departments.
- Dutchess County District Attorney's Office: \$5,000 for the Hyde Park Police Department.
- Essex County District Attorney's Office: \$14,809 for the Essex County Sheriff's Office, and Moriah and Ticonderoga police departments.
- Jefferson County District Attorney's Office: \$15,372 for the Adams, Alexandria Bay, Cape Vincent, Carthage, Clayton, Sackets Harbor and West Carthage police departments.
- Lewis County District Attorney's Office: \$10,000 for the Lowville Police Department and the Lewis County Sheriff's Office.
- Montgomery County District Attorney's Office: \$23,561 for the Amsterdam, Canajoharie, Fort Plains and St. Johnsville police departments.
- Oneida County District Attorney's Office: \$50,000 for the Boonville, Kirkland, New York Mills, Oriskany, Sherrill, Vernon, Whitesboro and Whitestown police departments and Oneida County Sheriff's Office.
- Onondaga County District Attorney's Office: \$17,016 for the Geddes, East Syracuse, North Syracuse and Skaneateles police departments.
- Oswego County District Attorney's Office: \$23,105 for the Fulton, Oswego, Phoenix and Pulaski police departments and the Oswego County Sheriff's Office.

- Orange County District Attorney's Office: \$29,200 for the Chester, Cornwall, Crawford, Montgomery, Monroe, Wallkill, Warwick and Woodbury police departments.
- Orleans County District Attorney's Office: \$18,648 for the Albion, Holley and Medina police departments and the Orleans County Sheriff's Office.
- Putnam County District Attorney's Office: \$15,000 for the Carmel and Kent police departments and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.
- Saratoga County District Attorney's Office: \$25,000 for its office, as well as the Saratoga County Sheriff's Office and the Mechanicville, Saratoga Springs and Waterford (town and village) police departments.
- Schuyler County District Attorney's Office: \$9,620 for the Schuyler County Sheriff's Office and Watkins Glen Police Department.
- St. Lawrence County District Attorney's Office: \$30,000 for the Canton, Gouverneur, Massena, Ogdensburg and Potsdam police departments and the St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Office.
- Steuben County District Attorney's Office: \$39,489 for the Addison, Bath, Canisteo, Corning, Hornell, Painted Post and Wayland police departments and the Steuben County Sheriff's Office.
- Wayne County District Attorney's Office: \$17,972 for the Lyons, Newark and Macedon police departments and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office.
- Westchester County District Attorney's Office: \$45,161 for the Bronxville, Dobbs Ferry, Eastchester, Harrison, Mamaroneck (town and village), Mount Kisco, North Castle, Sleepy Hollow and Yorktown Heights police departments.
- Yates County District Attorney's Office: \$9,620 for the Penn Yan Police Department and Yates County Sheriff's Office.

DCJS is a multi-function criminal justice support agency with a variety of responsibilities, including collection and analysis of statewide crime data; operation of the DNA databank and criminal fingerprint files; administration of federal and state criminal justice funds; support of criminal justice-related agencies across the state; and administration of the state's Sex Offender Registry and a toll-free telephone number (1-800-262-3257) that allows anyone to research the status of an offender.

http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/pio/press_releases/2011-5-13_pressrelease.html