



PRISON TRANSPARENCY PROJECT REPORT:

Ensuring Ethical Conduct: Body Cams and AI Oversight in Prisons

Prepared by:

Prison Transparency Project

Founder:

Dr. Angela Cotellessa Meyers

September 2024

<https://prisontransparency.com>

ENSURING ETHICAL CONDUCT: BODY CAMS AND AI OVERSIGHT IN PRISONS

The Problem of Unethical Behavior Among Prison Staff

- **Fabrication and Misconduct:** There is a well-documented history of prison staff fabricating documents, engaging in misconduct, and abusing their power in interactions with prisoners—often who are silenced, without advocates, support, or recourse. This is especially true for prisoners who are whistleblower reporting staff misconduct. Telling the truth about abuse by badge wearers frequently leads to further harassment and abuse in the prison setting; speaking truth to power can lead to severe retaliation by government representatives in the prisons. This widespread unethical behavior is often overlooked due to a lack of effective oversight and accountability within the prison system.

- **Inability to Ensure Compliance:** Prisons throughout the USA have consistently struggled to ensure that their staff comply with rules, laws, and ethical standards. This failure not only undermines the integrity of the justice system but also exacerbates the suffering of those incarcerated, many of whom are already vulnerable.

- **Create a Culture of Transparency and Accountability Through Expansive Use of Cameras:** The nature of prisons is that they are hidden, behind fences, walls, locks, gates, and bars. The key to improving accountability is to enhance transparency. Extensive use of cameras (mounted throughout facilities as well as implementing body-worn cameras) is a practical, effective way to curb abuse and misconduct amongst law enforcement officers and protect the rights of citizens - even ones who are incarcerated. Most traditional law enforcement officers such as highway patrol and police officers, are already required to wear body cameras; why should law enforcement officers in the carceral setting be held to a different standard? Camera footage is also a way to confirm the truth in case staff and incarcerated persons tell different accounts of what occurred; footage does not lie. In the search for truth, having widespread video and audio footage available would help ensure that the justice system has the necessary proof to ensure justice is done, as appropriate.

The Need for Body Cams and AI Oversight

- **Body Cams for Accountability in Prisons:** To address this issue, all prison staff who engage with prisoners should be required to wear body cams. These cameras This measure would make it more difficult for staff to engage in misconduct without being held accountable. When Correctional Officers behave unethically, this cannot be tolerated; they are representatives of government. Prison staff who act as if they are gang members (for example, as documented in the book, *The Green Wall*), need to be fired and barred from continuing to work in the carceral environment.

- **Artificial Intelligence Oversight for Ethical Conduct:** In addition to body cams, AI systems should be implemented to oversee staff conduct. AI can analyze footage and detect patterns of behavior that may indicate misconduct, ensuring that violations are flagged and addressed promptly. AI oversight would also provide a layer of impartiality, reducing the risk of human bias in monitoring and evaluating staff performance. AI tools could help train staff, making the process more efficient and effective.

Recording Hearings and Committees

- **Transparency in Decision-Making:** Rules violation report hearings, appeal hearings, and classroom committee meetings should all be recorded. There may be other types of engagements inside prisons or courtrooms which should also be recorded. This would ensure transparency and fairness in decision-making processes, making it harder for unethical practices to go unnoticed or unchallenged.

- **Documenting Proceedings:** By recording these proceedings, the prison system can maintain accurate records that can be reviewed if disputes arise. This would help protect the rights of inmates and hold staff accountable for their actions during these critical processes.

Extending Oversight to the Entire Justice System

- **Body Cams for Accountability for All Pertinent Staff in Criminal Justice System:** The lack of ethics is not limited to prison staff; it permeates the entire justice system. Therefore, the implementation of body cams and AI oversight should be extended to all members of the justice system, including law enforcement officers, court officials, parole and probation officers, and correctional staff. Having proof of what has occurred, via video and audio footage, isn't just helpful in prisons; it also should apply to Parole and Probation Officers, Police Officers, Highway Patrol, Judges, District Attorney staff, and all other members of government who have the power to ruin the lives of citizens; their jobs demand accountability, and recording their work would help ensure a new level of professionalism that has historically been sometimes absent from these populations.

- **Footage Should be Available to the Public:** Given citizens pay for the services of government, footage of their work should be publicly available to citizens—creating a new level of accountability and oversight that puts the rights of citizens first, and holds government staff to a standard of professionalism we have not seen before. would serve as a deterrent to unethical behavior and provide an objective record of interactions between staff and inmates.

- **Restoring Integrity:** The widespread use of body cams and AI oversight would help restore integrity to the justice system by creating a culture of accountability and transparency. This would not only deter misconduct but also rebuild public trust in the institutions responsible for upholding justice.

This report is part of a series produced by the Prison Transparency Project, aimed at uncovering and addressing issues within the prison system. For additional reports and recommendations, please visit our website at

<https://prisontransparency.com>.