



Nine questions to answer before you purchase your Interview Room Recording System

Congratulations! You're finally ready to purchase your new Interview Room Recording System. Now you can capture via audio and video those critical moments when child victims bravely share what their abusers have done. These nine questions will help you better understand the install process, optimize your recordings and mitigate anything inside or outside your interview room that could interfere with your recordings.

1 What do you want and need to record?

Many Forensic Interviews are recorded both in a Close-up and Wide-angle views. The Close-up captures the faces of the interviewer and interviewee while the Wide-angle captures the whole room. You will need a camera for each view/angle that you wish to record. Additionally, you will need to know the recording requirements of your local DA and jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions, the recording must show the whole room to document who is in the room.

2 What is in your Interview Room walls?

During installation of the microphones and camera(s), wires will be pulled (threaded) through your walls. Pulling wires through an internal wall presents fewer challenges than through an external wall. Access to the building's blueprints is best, but if those are not available, you will need to know your building's construction. For instance, if you have an exterior wall, are there any firebreaks or plumbing?

3 Will your cameras be visible or hidden?

This decision may be governed by your local jurisdiction if it requires visible cameras. If your cameras will be visible, consider small unobtrusive camera(s).

The interviewer can casually point these out to a child and proceed with the interview. If hidden cameras are an option, they can be concealed within items like thermostats or smoke alarms.

4 Where is the focal point of your room?

Where will the interviewer and interviewee be seated? Which walls will each of them face? With this information, your installer can calculate where to place the camera(s) and microphone for optimal video and audio capture. Note: Microphones will pick up the hum from fluorescent lights. So, look up and consider this when determining your focal point.

5 What is the best camera?

Consider small, multifocal cameras. These cameras can be set to the view you want, including close-up or wide-angle views. Large industrial cameras are not recommended as they are not designed to capture smaller interior spaces. They can also interfere with the interview process by intimidating children.

6 Can a wall mounted camera really view the whole room?

No, there will always be a "dead" spot just below your wall mounted camera. To keep a child from roaming into the "dead" spot, consider adding large potted plants or a piece of furniture like book shelf just below the camera.

7 What is outside your room's walls?

Even with optimal placement in the center of a ceiling, microphones can still pick up outside noises that have filtered through your room's walls. There are several options you can take to mitigate noise pollution coming into your room including: acoustical ceiling tiles, wall-to-wall carpeting, curtains and fabric wall coverings. These will also help absorb any echoes in the room.

Noises from hallways or adjoining rooms can be challenging. Sensitive mics can capture foot traffic, like high heels, in an uncarpeted hallway or loud voices from an adjoining room where groups congregate. Consider carpeting for the hallway. Look for ways to mitigate group noise. Can your center manage who is in the room next door during an interview?

If you can, avoid having an external wall because you may hear road noise or sounds from an outside AC unit. These will require more investment and effort to muffle.

8 Where is your observation room?

If your observation room adjoins your interview room, the observers may "double" hear the conversation from the interview room. Example: the interviewer asks a question in real-time which the observers hear through the common wall. Then with a few seconds delay, the recorder plays the question in the observation room. If this is your situation, consider purchasing headphones for each observer.

9 What research have you done?

If you have not done so already, schedule a visit with another CAC to see how they are set-up. Reach out to others by phone or email. Ask lots of questions:

- What do they like about their set-up?
- What surprised them during the process?
- What would they do different?
- Do they like their interview room recording system?
- Is the technology easy to use?
- Would they choose it next time?
- Are they satisfied with the quality of the install and their ongoing support from their system provider?

Finally, ask providers for references and contact those references.

