

7 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DESIGNING A MODERN LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY INTERVIEW ROOM

The Complete Guide for Your Site Analysis & Room Layout, Recording
Equipment, Digital Evidence Management, and More

The logo for iRecord, featuring a red dot above the letter 'i' in 'Record', which is written in a stylized, italicized font.

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AN INTRODUCTION

Today's values for the modern interview room have evolved. Yet too many agencies are struggling with how to improve their space.

We need our interview recording solutions to capture accurate evidence for the court. Along the way, the interview room environment should also complement the way your team works. This guide will help answer that most crucial question:

How can you best ensure that the interview room is conducive to bringing the truth to light?

There are many phases to the development process for your agency. When reviewed together, the

sections within this resource cover everything you need to know:

Part I Interview Room Space Needs Analysis

Part II Modern Layout & Equipment

Part III Digital Evidence Management Solutions

In these pages, we'll clearly identify the 7 Things You Need to Know About Designing a Modern Interview Room. Then your agency can move forward with confidence—and build a solution that truly makes sense for the way you work and the citizens you serve!

PART I: INTERVIEW ROOM SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS

The first order of business is to carefully define the scope of your project. This includes determining the physical placement of the new interview room, identifying the members of your design-build team, and collecting the initial cost estimates.

Every agency is different. Often an interview recording room is already onsite. But does it meet today's standards? Your agency's space needs analysis will help point you in the right direction for the necessary upgrades.

1. FACILITY OPTIONS NEW BUILD OR RENOVATION?

A detailed space needs analysis will take a creative look at your facility's existing layout, as well as its potential for a remodel.

Your interview room should comfortably accommodate three individuals. Working with a dimension of 8' x 10' often makes the most sense.

Conducting interviews in a room without any exterior windows is also ideal, because even with drapes or blinds, the subject may sense a lack of privacy during the conversation.



It should quickly become clear whether you have an optimal place within your facility for the updated interview room. A consultant or architect who is familiar with law enforcement protocols and LE-specific design layouts can help conduct this analysis. Otherwise, be sure to keep the following considerations in mind:

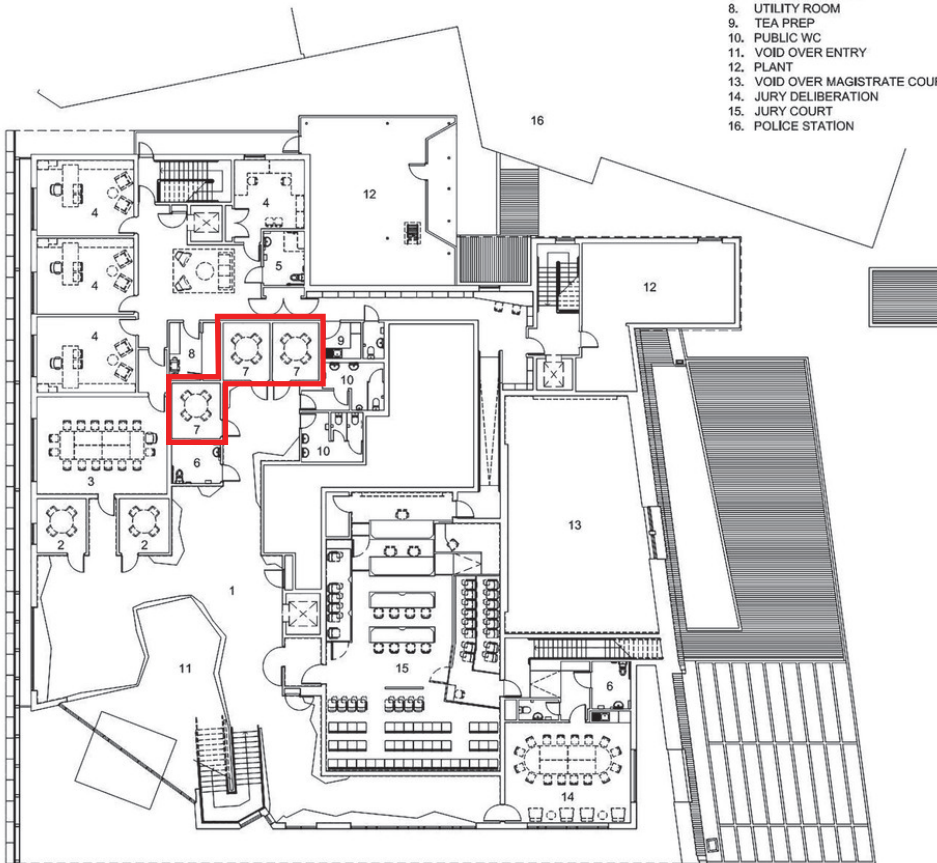
- **Structural Systems (e.g., HVAC, plumbing, fire protection)**
- **Electrical & Telecommunications Systems**
- **Access Floors & Ceiling Heights**
- **Private Space with No Windows**
- **Building Layout (i.e., located away from holding cells)**

Agencies must also anticipate future legal mandates and changes for their facility's adult and juvenile inmate space needs. Planned department growth and agency needs may impact your decision too.





1. PUBLIC WAITING
2. MEETING ROOM
3. MEDIATION ROOM
4. OFFICE
5. UAT AND SHOWER
6. UAT
7. INTERVIEW ROOM
8. UTILITY ROOM
9. TEA PREP
10. PUBLIC WC
11. VOID OVER ENTRY
12. PLANT
13. VOID OVER MAGISTRATE COURT
14. JURY DELIBERATION
15. JURY COURT
16. POLICE STATION



TAG Architects + Iredale Pedersen Hook Architects. *The New Kununurra Courthouse*. Archdaily.com, www.archdaily.com/642583/the-new-kununurra-courthouse-tag-architects-iredale-pedersen-hook-architects/557f831ce58ece56d8000049-the-new-kununurra-courthouse-tag-architects-iredale-pedersen-hook-architects-first-floor-plan?next_project=no

Standard one room set up that has a natural flow for suspect intake, but unassuming enough for victim interviews too. Sometimes agencies will use an office space as a secondary interview room.

Ideally the space will be located in a neutral part of the building, away from any reminders of what the next steps might be for suspects who decide to tell the truth.

Of course, some agencies will have the option to acquire and adapt another existing facility in the area. Moving to a new address can be a strategic solution for agencies that are already outgrowing their current space.

Your interview recording room(s) may also require new communications closets, evidence processing areas, or other workstations. Anticipating these needs helps ensure you're designing a space that will last for years to come.

2.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT *BUILDING THE TEAM & BUDGET*



Any construction or renovation project is only as good as its team. Yet without a clear point-person, these partnerships aren't always easy to navigate. What's more, law enforcement agencies often face budgetary constraints. Finding a solution that can address these concerns right out of the gate is critical.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE TEAM

This is all the more reason to carefully consider who the partners will be for your interview room(s) project. Experience counts. Hiring the right people and organizations for the right positions helps ensure the work will remain on-track and on-budget:

- **Interview Room Consultant**
- **Architect Firm**
- **Contractor**

Your consultant will be the one to help get the ball rolling. But in order to properly advise you on the space needs analysis, they should have previous and obvious experience with law enforcement facility projects.

Gathering reference checks from other agencies can help give your department peace of mind. Be sure to ask pointed questions about their working relationship with any consultant, architect firm, building contractor, or interview room equipment provider.

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION OPTIONS

a) Design-Build

This method utilizes a request for proposal (RFP) format, which requires an agency to clearly detail their facility needs. You then work to select your architect and contractor as a duo. Since these types of submissions include both the project design and construction evaluations, you'll be conducting simultaneous reviews.

b) Fully-Partnered

A second option is to hire your team as a united front. In this scenario, the project costs are defined upfront. The proposal encompasses a set budget for the entire scope of the project. Consequently, it's in everyone's best interests to keep the design and construction process on-schedule.

The fully-partnered approach works to give agencies clarity for their project budget. Each party works for a pre-determined fee.

Additionally, the fully-partnered approach ensures that your interview room plans are specific to your audio video recording equipment. Inviting your solutions provider into these conversations can make a big difference to your project's success. It's crucial that your facility's network cabling and hardware are seamlessly incorporated into the interview room design. *(More on this in Part II.)*

It's also important to remember that a standardized room setup across your jurisdiction's departments can help reduce costs across the board. Assuming your interview room is done right, it will be easy to replicate all throughout your region.

PART II: MODERN LAYOUT & EQUIPMENT

Decades ago, stainless steel benches and tables bolted to the floor were common-place. But today's interrogation techniques have evolved, and we need to have higher expectations for interview rooms too.

A minimal, yet professional layout and modern technology are critical for recording detailed and accurate interview evidence. This section is focused on all of the physical aspects of your new-and-improved space.

3.

ROOM DESIGN & FURNITURE GOALS FOR THE MODERN LAYOUT



Having the proper layout for your interview room works to uphold your agency's integrity and protect every detail for court-admissible evidence. Installing microphones and cameras at the best possible angles will help produce a high-quality recording every time. Even the seemingly "mundane" aspects of your interview room are critically important.

INTERVIEW ROOM DESIGN

a) The Door

The standard recommendation is for the door to not have a lock. It also shouldn't resemble a "cell door."

A solid door without any windows is best because it allows for privacy while simultaneously providing acoustic control. Reviewing the door's Sound Transmission Class (STC) rating is always important for your soundproofing efforts. The higher the STC rating, the better the noise reduction. You should ideally be using a door with a rating between 50 and 60, or even greater.

b) Flooring

Short-fiber carpeting tends to work well because it helps absorb sound. This also makes it easier to clean the room.

c) Walls

To eliminate distractions and foster a sense of privacy, the room should not have any windows. As with the floors, the walls should be as well-insulated as possible for echo elimination within the room and noise reduction from outside. A light pastel paint color is also ideal.

d) Artwork

Agencies should also be aware of how their interview room will be perceived by a jury viewing the interrogation's audio video recording.

Sometimes a piece of artwork can help emulate an office setting. It's best for this to be on the wall behind the interview subject, which will subsequently put the artwork in view of the jurors.

The same is true for clocks—these should only ever be placed on the back wall. And under no circumstance should the interview room have any reminders of police work on display (e.g., framed certificates, department patches).

Your interview room's appearance should never raise any concerns regarding issues of duress or coercion.

FURNITURE SELECTION & PLACEMENT

a) The Writing Surface

The traditional setup of having a desk or table set between the interview subject and the interviewer is outdated. This can end up acting as a sort of “barrier” or “shield” to make a suspect more inclined to withhold the truth.

Additionally, you don’t want the writing surface to conceal the interview subject’s lower body movements. All aspects of their nonverbal behavior need to be analyzed. Positioning the table against a wall helps eliminate these problems. The detective or investigator can then sit off to the side, which gives the cameras a better angle of the interview subject for the recording.

b) The Chairs

You will likely place three chairs in the room: one for the interview subject, one for the investigator, and another for an observer. Go with solid chairs that don’t swivel, and be sure to keep the chairs’ styles consistent. None should look more comfortable than the others.

How the chairs are placed also matters. If the investigator directly faces the interview subject, they might block the best views for the camera. A height of six feet and positioning the camera at a slight angle will help. *(More on that in the next section!)*

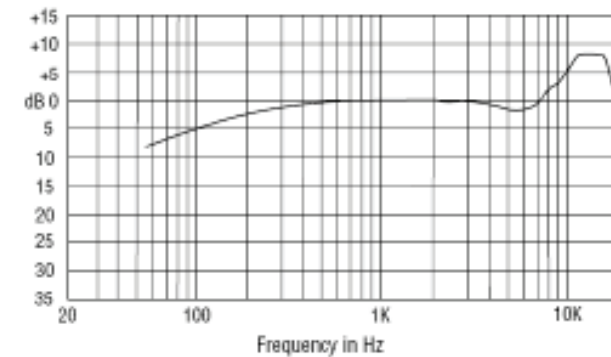
The atmosphere of your interview room directly impacts the suspect or witness being interviewed.

4. AUDIO VIDEO EQUIPMENT DELIVER ACCURATE EVIDENCE

We all understand the fear surrounding lost evidence. Presenting fuzzy video content or poor audio before the court simply isn't an option either. Any chance of misinterpretation is too great of a risk for our justice system.

The devastation of losing interview evidence could even be perceived as “unforgiveable” for our most difficult cases. High-quality, reliable, and secure recordings are paramount.

Fig. 1. Frequency Response



MODERN MICROPHONES

Record every word: A modern interview room will be well-insulated to protect against outside noise or echoes. But you should also find the right microphones to accommodate any variations in your subject's tone of voice. Permanent microphone installations help agencies maintain high-quality for every piece of interview evidence.

- **Room Echo Elimination**
- **Omni-Directional Microphones**
- **Consistent Microphone Positioning**

HIGH-DEFINITION CAMERAS

Capture every detail: An individual's physical cues often communicate just as much as their speech. Good audio video evidence will depict body language and have a clear line of sight for their facial expressions too.

That being said, your recordings shouldn't attempt to mimic the movie industry. But agencies should never settle for outdated microphones or cameras either. Rather, modern audio video evidence takes a middle-of-the-road approach.

- **High-Resolution to Support 1080p**
- **Internet Protocol (IP) Network Cameras**
- **100% Synchronized Audio and Video**

Quality equipment is still affordable. Just make sure it will consistently record clear audio and video.



Recessed In-Wall Cameras provide a direct line-of-sight view to the interviewee.

5. INTERVIEW RECORDING OPTIONS CAMERA PLACEMENT & CABLING

You only have one chance to capture a statement. That's why the audio video equipment and your network infrastructure need to work in harmony with the space.

The fully-partnered design approach provides law enforcement agencies with their specific room schematic early on.

As stated earlier in this resource, your recording solutions provider should be able to help advise your agency with the equipment installation process—and how to customize the setup to your space.

2-CAMERA SYSTEM

Cameras will typically be placed at a height of 6 to 10 feet and view the subject at a slight angle. This arrangement helps ensure that the entire body, from head to toe, will remain in view throughout the recording. Most interview room designs will determine the wall-mounted camera placement first.



The priority for your camera placement is to continuously record with unobstructed views. As this Investigator Tip / developed by John E. Reid and Associates Inc.¹ reminds us, there are multiple benefits for this layout:

“Remember that the purpose of the recording is not only to document that the suspect was properly treated, but also to reveal their emotional and physical well-being.”

The court and jury rely on high-quality recordings in order to resolve a case, and it’s best when there are two different perspectives to review. Different types of cameras make it easier to achieve all of these goals.

- Covert Thermostat
- Covert Smoke / Fire Alert
- Covert Data Wall Plate
- Pan-Tilt-Zoom Cameras
- Overt Dome Cameras
- Recessed Wall Mount (48" above the floor)

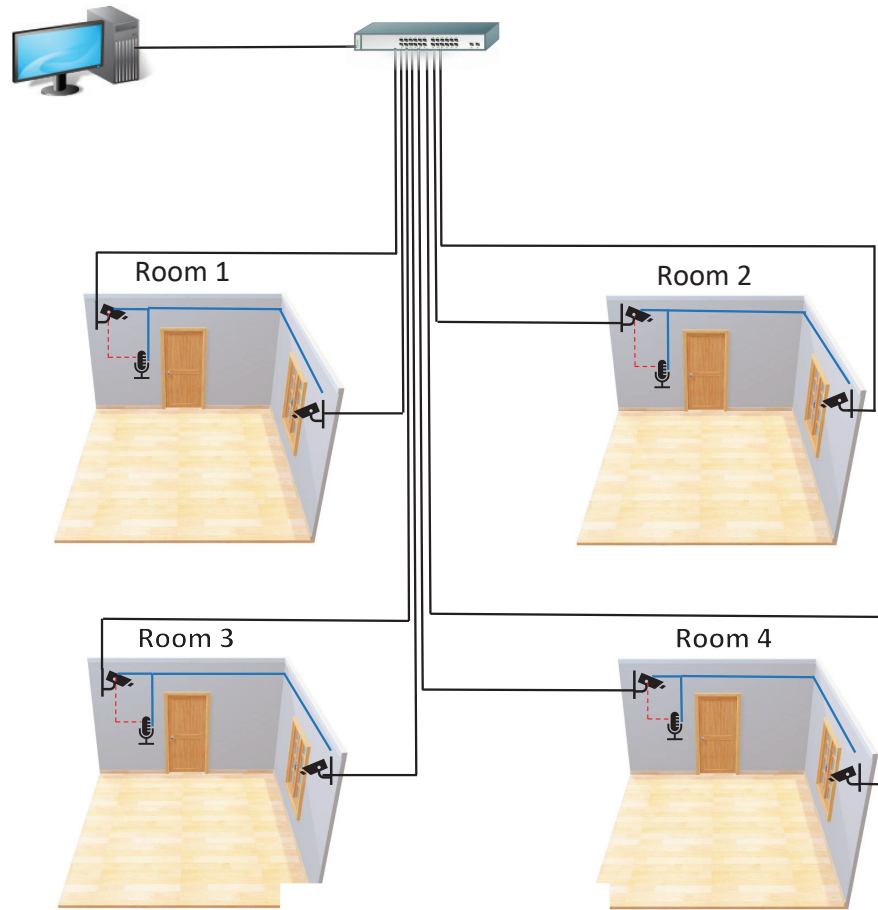


Dual Camera Configuration with PIR Sensor and Thermostat Camera

Reid, John E. "Designing an Interview/Interrogation Room: John E. Reid and Associates, Inc.." *Designing an Interview/Interrogation Room* | John E. Reid and Associates, Inc., 1 Mar. 2010, <https://reid.com/resources/investigator-tips/designing-an-interview-interrogation-room>.



4 Rooms | Dual Camera



Legend

Cat 6 cabling

- Mic power to ip camera - - - - -
- IP Camera to network switch ————
- Mic to IP Camera ————

In keeping with the type of simple and familiar furniture, the interview room's cameras should be equally "neutral." While some laws may require a jurisdiction to use an overt camera setup, there are plenty of ways to create a reasonably comfortable space—and one that allows your subject to focus on the conversation, not the recording equipment.

CABLING NETWORK DESIGN

Once the camera details are figured out, your recording solutions provider can begin to analyze your facility's cabling needs and other hardware solutions. Depending on the size of your agency, the cabling may need to service more than one interview recording room.

INTUITIVE SYSTEM & PROCESS

When done right, initiating your interview recordings should be simple. Police agencies already have enough on their plate, and so their equipment and recording process should be straight-forward and user-friendly.

Permanent installations for your microphones and cameras provide consistency for both the interview evidence recordings and your team members. The most natural solutions are often the best.



For example, your interview room could use a wall switch for the system's easy start/stop recording function.

As stated earlier in this resource, your recording solutions provider will be able to guide you through the most intuitive and practical layout for your space. Their partnership with your agency should include everything from the initial room design plans, recording hardware installation, software integration, and more.

PART III: DIGITAL EVIDENCE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

The final stage of developing a modern interview room is to address your evidence storage. Agencies that move to a secure cloud solution—and one that also functions as an online portal—are in a better position to move each case along more quickly.

Audio video recordings should remain digital. With today's technology, physical transfers are outdated. We no longer need to copy interview evidence recordings onto flash drives or DVDs. The modern workflow takes place in the cloud.

6.

THE SOFTWARE STREAMLINED EVIDENCE REVIEW



Agencies need to present clear audio video recordings—and nothing less. This crucial evidence is often the cornerstone for bringing the truth to light. Yet we can't afford to overlook the system's users for interview recording. Intuitive and reliable software is at the core of the digital evidence management process.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Certain aspects of your new interview recording software are non-negotiable. Be sure to find a solution that offers your agency all of the following, at minimum:

- **Non-Proprietary CODECS**
(e.g., MP4 open-source files)
- **Video Date/Time Overlay Watermarking**
- **Chain of Evidence & Audit Trail Report**

Also note: Interdepartmental security is another crucial aspect of your recording software, yet not every provider incorporates this feature.

USER-FRIENDLY SOLUTIONS

Detectives and other law enforcement professionals can benefit from a variety of interview recording software functions that are specifically-designed to make reviewing evidence and creating redactions quick and easy:

- **Video Grab Frame Technology**
- **Video Redaction Software**
- **Searchable Notes**

Adopting new technology should never be a burden. A comprehensive and intuitive solution helps streamline your team members' caseload.



7. YOUR DEMS OPTIONS ONLINE PORTAL COLLABORATION

A robust digital evidence management solution (DEMS) can give agencies the power to securely organize all of their interview evidence. Working with Cloud Storage is convenient and offers true peace of mind. Yet not all solutions are created equal.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CLOUD

HOW THE CLOUD WORKS

Many agencies are still operating with onsite storage for their digital files. But switching to the Cloud is

much more secure. With Cloud Storage, agencies can avoid the devastation of losing evidence. The digital files don't need to be stored on your own network servers. Instead, the content is stored online and accessible only through private logins.



CLOUD BENEFITS

One of the most obvious benefits of Cloud Storage is that it gives agencies peace of mind. When the solution is synched with your entire digital evidence management solution, your files will be automatically saved and protected with secure encryption.

- **Securely Share Evidence with Prosecutors**
- **Lowers Risk with Redundant Storage**
- **Encrypted & Remote Online Access**
- **Better Organization for Every Case**

Again, a close partnership with your solutions provider is key. Your interview recording equipment and the software your agency uses need to connect with your Cloud Solution. Everything needs to work together for a truly secure setup.

The best Cloud Solution will perfectly integrate with your agency's recording process—and should serve as a collaborative portal for your jurisdiction's caseload too.

THE CLOUD PORTAL SOLUTION

Cloud Solutions that operate as an online portal give agencies secure, remote access to all of their digital evidence. Plus, every party involved in a case will be able to review the latest evidence. They can even add their own notes so it's easier than ever to collaborate on the case.

Any basic Cloud Solution can offer security and accessibility. But law enforcement and public

safety professionals benefit even more with a system that functions as an online portal.

You no longer need to deal with physical flash drives or DVD transfers for your interview evidence. The portal helps everyone work more efficiently and move the case along quickly, which makes it even easier to continue keeping your community safe.

THE INTERVIEW ROOM PROJECT RECAP

Modern interview rooms are designed to deliver the most accurate evidence to the court—for every case.

The law enforcement industry holds itself to high standards. Your department's critical work keeps communities safe and allows them to thrive.

As agencies continue to adopt new technology and solutions for police work and public safety, multiple tactics should be kept in mind. We must work through the following phases to create interview recording rooms that are truly modern:

1. Facility Options
2. Project Development
3. Room Design & Furniture
4. Audio Video Equipment
5. Interview Recording Options
6. The Software
7. Your DEMS Options

WE HOPE THIS RESOURCE GIVES YOUR AGENCY CLARITY FOR THE ROAD AHEAD. BEST OF LUCK ON YOUR NEW PD INTERVIEW ROOM!

iRecord has proudly partnered with law enforcement agencies all throughout the country for their new interview recording rooms. Our solutions are specifically-designed for police work and public safety professionals, and we guide clients through the entire process of their room design, equipment installation, Digital Evidence Management Solution, and more.

For more information, please visit www.iRecord.tv or call (800) 425-7637