



ACADEMY OF LAW NEWS

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Virtual Words . . . Real Consequences!

Fall Seminar to Address Cyber-Bullying and the Law

By **Guido Gabrielle III**

They say that the Stone Age didn't end because we ran out of stones. They're right -- the stones were replaced by things that were better, faster, and more convenient. Sadly, the same can now be said about the stones we used to throw at each other.

Playgrounds, newspapers, telephones, and the mail have long been misused by the insecure and angry to harm others. Human nature may not have changed, but its methods have. The Internet, in its many forms, is regularly used to harass and bully.

As attorneys, we are the ones often called upon to help resolve these disputes. It simply cannot be ignored that computers and electronic communications have become a part of each and every case that comes across our desks. We cannot properly serve our clients if we are not familiar with the unique issues raised by computer evidence and electronic communications. Cyber-bullying, or harass-

ment over electronic media, has become alarmingly common in recent months. News accounts of its effects on children, teenagers, and adults have made clear that this kind of harassment, although committed in a virtual space, can have real-life consequences. Homemakers have been harassed into depression; professionals have been slandered to the detriment of their businesses; and teenagers have been tragically pushed to suicide. Vicious messages are being sent over text messages, email, Internet forums, and even video game consoles, under the shroud of perceived anonymity.

When your client is the victim or the accused perpetrator of cyber-bullying, what should you do? What crimes or civil causes of action may be implicated? What type of evidence should you pursue, and where do you find it? How do you use this evidence in court?

On September 21, the Suffolk Academy of Law will present a CLE program to

address these questions and provide attorneys with a primer on cyber-bullying, computer evidence, and computer investigations. The faculty will include Guido Gabriele, Esq., Barry M. Smolowitz, Esq., Scott M. Mishkin, Esq., and others with expertise in the area. Discussion will cover

cyber-bullying's various forms, the types of evidence implicated by electronic communications, criminal and civil causes of action, evidence collection, use of evidence at trial, and more.

For more information or to register, call the Academy of Law at 631-234-5588.