

AREAS OF PRACTICE

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June 22, 2010

Facebook Video Reveals Student's Assault at a Prince George's County High School

Advancing technology and popular social networking sites such as Facebook have opened up a whole new world in the criminal justice system. Previously unheard of computer crimes, such as teen sexting and cyber-bullying, are becoming commonplace. Video sharing sites have seen exponential growth not only in family videos, but also in videos of "pranks" and other criminal activity. Every [Maryland criminal attorney](#) has seen a case where video evidence makes up the bulk of the prosecution's case. When such a video goes viral, the general public sees that evidence as well, possibly making it more difficult to find an unbiased jury if a case goes to trial. Social media sites have made it easy for teens to post video of their antics, not realizing the consequences of documenting potentially criminal behavior and broadcasting it worldwide over the internet.

Recently, the beating of a student at Bowie High School in Prince George's County was posted to Facebook, launching a police investigation into the assault.

The video shows one student knocking another to the ground and repeatedly kicking and punching him while other students either watched or ignored the incident. Only one student is seen striking the victim, but during the attack, someone stole the student's backpack and iPod. A spokesman for Prince George's County schools says that other students have been identified in planning and executing the assault, and all students involved face expulsion.

The father of the victim wants to press criminal charges. The Prince George's County sheriff's office plans to review not only the Facebook video, but also footage from the school's security cameras. If authorities find enough evidence to prosecute, the attacker's [Prince George's County criminal lawyer](#) will need to closely review the video to determine whether the evidence is as convincing as prosecutors believe.

Video evidence is becoming rampant in prosecuting criminal cases. From dashboard cameras in police cars to security surveillance cameras to cell phone video from bystanders, cameras are everywhere. However, in the

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hands of a competent [Maryland criminal lawyer](#), that video evidence is not necessarily as concrete as it might first appear. Poor image quality may cause misidentification of suspects. Inaccurate date stamps may affect an investigation. Video editing may misrepresent a person's actions. However, with the ability of evidence to go viral in a matter of minutes, people would be wise to consider their actions in the presence of a camera.