

Charlotte Observer
Mon, Oct. 27, 2003

N.C. juvenile defense neglected, report says

By the Associated Press

RALEIGH - N.C. lawyers don't aggressively pursue cases on behalf of their poor juvenile clients, a report says.

The American Bar Association and Southern Juvenile Defender Center in Atlanta, which issued the report last week, recommend that North Carolina set up a statewide juvenile public defender's office. The report said nearly three-quarters of those who represent poor kids are private attorneys who have been drafted into the job because some counties don't have public defenders.

"I don't think we as a state have provided adequate training for the lawyers who are doing juvenile delinquency defense," said Tye Hunter, executive director of the state's Office of Indigent Defense Services. "We need to do a better job."

For teens charged with a crime, whether they end up in detention largely depends on the attorney. Often the first time a lawyer and client meet is in court, according to the report.