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## **Report critical of N.C. public defenders**

The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) - A report says North Carolina lawyers don't aggressively pursue cases on behalf of their poor juvenile clients.

The American Bar Association and Southern Juvenile Defender Center in Atlanta, which issued the report last week, recommend North Carolina establish 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 defender's offices.

"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."

Hunter called the report realistic.

His office assisted report investigators, who visited 11 counties to conduct interviews and surveyed judges, court counselors, public defenders and private lawyers.

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.

Investigators found some dedicated defenders and quality defense programs, but they found more lawyers confused about their mission.

The study said some attorneys rarely review police reports, meet a client before interrogations or file motions. Attorneys instead rely on the investigation and recommendations of court counselors and state juvenile justice employees.

"A juvenile may be charged, meet them (an attorney), walk into the courtroom and plead to a felony," said Durham District Court Judge Marcia Morey.