



## Media Contacts

Rey Cheatham Banks, Senior Policy and  
Communications Associate  
[National Juvenile Defender Center](http://www.njdc.org)  
202-452-0010  
[ppuritz@njdc.info](mailto:ppuritz@njdc.info)



Kim Dvorchak, Executive Director  
[Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition](http://www.cjdc.org)  
303-825-0194  
[Kim@cjdc.org](mailto:Kim@cjdc.org)

### **Statewide Report Finds Lack of Due Process for State's Youth** *Colorado needs greater statewide juvenile defense leadership and vision.*

**Washington, DC**—A comprehensive evaluation of Colorado's juvenile indigent defense delivery system finds the need for greater investment in and engagement on juvenile defense. The National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC), in association with the Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition, has issued *Colorado: An Assessment of Access to Counsel and Quality of Representation in Juvenile Delinquency Court*.

The report finds that the lack of statewide leadership on juvenile defense, coupled with the lack of professional standards, has left most defenders who practice in juvenile court without adequate support in a system that largely depreciates their role. "There is no question that Coloradans care deeply about their youth," said Patricia Puritz, NJDC's executive director and author of the report. "This concern, however, does not automatically translate into any genuine protection of a child's due process rights."

Key professional and juvenile justice organizations in the state invited NJDC to undertake a rigorous examination of the state's juvenile defense system and offer recommendations and strategies to improve juvenile court processes. "We were thrilled to partner with NJDC on this game-changing initiative," said Kim Dvorchak, executive director of CJDC. "We see this as a wonderful opportunity for the state to harness the momentum from the report's release and address some of the concerns we've had for some time around due process issues."

The NJDC assessment highlights a number of promising approaches and innovations that strengthen and enhance juvenile indigent defense practice in both individual cases and on a large-scale. In other areas, however, children's due process rights are not being honored or existing systemic barriers make the meaningful exercise of these rights unattainable. The late appointment of counsel, the difficulty of applying for appointed counsel, and a widespread view that children do not need counsel have led to high rates of children waiving their right to an attorney with little knowledge or appreciation of the long-term consequences of that decision. The report also finds that, as a routine matter, children in custody remain shackled and handcuffed during all juvenile court proceedings—a stark contrast to adult practices.

"We sincerely hope this assessment sparks a conversation on the challenges within the Colorado juvenile indigent defense system and provides the many dedicated juvenile justice professionals in Colorado with a catalyst for change," said Puritz.

-more-

**About NJDC**

The National Juvenile Defender Center was created to respond to the critical need to build the capacity of the juvenile defense bar and to improve access to counsel and quality of representation for children in the justice system. NJDC gives juvenile defense attorneys a more permanent capacity to address practice issues, improve advocacy skills, build partnerships, exchange information, and participate in the national debate over juvenile crime and justice. NJDC assessments are part of a nationwide effort to document the strengths and weaknesses of juvenile defense delivery systems. NJDC has conducted 21 assessments using a time-tested, methodological approach. Colorado is part of the Southwest Juvenile Defender Center (SWJDC), one of NJDC's nine regional centers, which also encompasses Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.

**About CJDC**

The Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition is dedicated to ensuring excellence in juvenile defense and advocacy and justice for all children and youth in Colorado. CJDC strives to elevate the practice of juvenile defense and advocacy, by holding up juvenile defense as a skilled specialty practice, presenting continuing legal education seminars, developing resources and materials for juvenile defenders and advocates, and by supporting indigent defense through ongoing litigation support and assistance.

A copy of *Colorado: An Assessment of Access to Counsel and Quality of Representation in Juvenile Delinquency Court* is available at <http://www.njdc.info/colorado.php>.

###