



November 27, 2007

## Report: State's Youth Courts lack staff, resources

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Delinquent youths don't get the help they need in the state's Youth Court system because defense attorneys are overwhelmed with excessive caseloads and inadequate resources, according to results of a study released today.

The study, which began in 2005, revealed that, while some public defenders in the Youth Court system are devoted to their clients, most struggle to provide constitutionally adequate representation, said attorney Jennifer Riley-Collins of the Mississippi Youth Justice Project.

"The failures of the juvenile indigent defense system have important implications for public safety," said Riley-Collins, who co-authored the report.

As part of its recommendations to correct deficiencies, the report urges the Legislature to increase resources to Youth Courts, including social workers and investigators.

The study was done with the support of state Supreme Court Chief Justice Jim Smith and others.