

Public Defenders

Michigan Public Defender System One of the Worst, ACLU Says

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By [Stephanie Francis Ward](#)

When it comes to state public defender programs, Michigan's is one of the worst, the American Civil Liberties Union reports in a report released yesterday.

The paper, "[Faces of Failing Public Defense Systems: Portraits of Michigan's Constitutional Crisis](#)" (PDF), says that the state's 83 county public defenders' offices—each with their own policies—lack oversight, funding and training, the [Detroit News](#) reports.

A 2008 National Legal Aid & Defender Association [study](#) heavily cited in the ACLU report found some public defenders in Detroit handled up to six times as many misdemeanor cases as they should.

Michigan is one of seven states that require counties fund and manage their own public defender systems, according to the Detroit News. The counties combined spend \$72 million a year, according to the study, but the figure is more than \$50 million short of what national standards demand.

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