

Report: Utah children face barriers to accessing defense attorneys

Published: Wednesday, 30 January 2019 19:33

Written by: Anna Thomas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 31, 2019

CONTACT: Anna Thomas, Senior Policy Analyst, anna@utahchildren.org, (720) 275-1557

Report: Utah children face barriers to accessing defense attorneys in juvenile court system

“And Justice For All Kids: A Children’s Right to ‘The Guiding Hand of Counsel’ and the State of Defense Representation for Children In Utah’s Juvenile Courts,” gives recommendations to improve outcomes for children appearing in court.

Jan. 31, 2019 — A new report by Voices for Utah Children and the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law released today outlines startling concerns about youth access to defense attorneys in Utah’s juvenile courts system.

And Justice For All Kids notes several barriers youth face in access to full legal representation when appearing in juvenile court a number of negative outcomes associated with insufficient legal defense counsel in juvenile courts.

The report shares several key findings, including:

- Young people who appear in juvenile court in rural counties don’t have the same access to full legal representation as youth in urban counties;
- Young people face practical and procedural barriers to exercising their right to be represented by a defense attorney at court hearings, even at detention hearings when their liberty is at stake; and
- Utah juvenile court judges overwhelmingly support a system that provides an attorney for every youth appearing in their courtrooms, from initial proceedings until termination of jurisdiction.

There are also several recommendations made in the report, with the intent of strengthening Utah’s juvenile defense system. One key recommendation is to pass

Report: Utah children face barriers to accessing defense attorneys

Published: Wednesday, 30 January 2019 19:33

Written by: Anna Thomas

legislation currently proposed by Sen. Todd Weiler (R-Woods Cross), [“SB32, Indigent Defense Act Amendments,”](#) during the 2019 session.

S.J. Quinney College of Law students, supported by staff from Voices for Utah Children, observed nearly 200 court proceedings in almost all Utah counties, and conducted interviews with twenty of Utah’s 30 sitting juvenile court judges, to inform *And Justice For All Kids*.



[The full report is available for download here.](#)

For a free print copy, contact Voices for Utah Children at (801) 364-1182.

###