

## Southern Center for Human Rights

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### *Indigent Defense – Georgia*

The Southern Center for Human Rights is not able to provide representation to individuals in their cases. (The only individual cases that we take are capital cases.) We do, however, keep the complaints we receive as part of monitoring the representation people are receiving.

You have a right to a lawyer who will zealously represent you within the bounds of the law. This right is guaranteed by both the United States Constitution and the Georgia Constitution.

The right to a lawyer includes the right to meet with the lawyer about your case. A lawyer appointed by the court, or a public defender, is required to meet "promptly" after the appointment. You also have the right to have the lawyer answer any questions you have about the charges or the case, conduct an investigation of the charges, identify legal issues, file motions on your behalf (such as motions for bond or to suppress evidence), engage in plea negotiations with the prosecutors, and provide you with advice about what to do, as well as speak for you in court. Any conversations that the lawyer has with you are confidential.

There are public defender offices in all of the judicial circuits in Georgia except Cherokee, Cobb, Forsyth and Gwinnett. We enclose a list of the public defenders and the contact people for Cobb and Gwinnett. You should contact the local public defender office and tell them that you would like to apply for representation.

You may also ask the staff at the jail for an Application for Counsel form. However, **do not discuss your case with anyone working in the jail.** Simply tell them that you need to apply for a court-appointed attorney, or that you need to see the Public Defender. Once you receive the form, fill it out and turn it in. If you do not hear anything within 3 days, contact the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council (GPDSC) and tell them that you have not yet been appointed a lawyer. GPDSC is responsible for overseeing most of the Public Defender offices in the state.

If you have been appointed a lawyer, but have concerns or complaints about the representation, you may write to the Chief Public Defender at your local public defender office. You may also write to the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council at:

Georgia Public Defenders Standards Council  
104 Marietta St., Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30306  
(800) 676-4432