

Study criticizes FBI employee discipline

WASHINGTON (AP)—The FBI has a deeply flawed process for disciplining employees that leads to perceptions of favoritism and unfairness and is run by an office characterized by some as a snake pit that fails to attract top people, according to an independent review released Friday.

The 70-page study of the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility concluded that morale suffers throughout the bureau because of a feeling among agents that managers are treated better in disciplinary cases than are rank-and-file employees.

Although the review could not find evidence of a systemic disparity, it concluded that "the perception itself has had an

enormous adverse impact" on the agency.

"That's bad for the bureau," said Wick Sollers, an attorney with the Atlanta-based law firm King & Spalding. Sollers helped conduct the review with another of the firm's partners, former Attorney General Griffin Bell, and former top FBI executive Lee Colwell.

The study was requested by FBI Director Robert Mueller to deal with multiple misgivings about OPR raised in another internal Justice Department report.

That Justice review came after FBI agent John Roberts, in an October 2002 appearance on CBS' "60 Minutes," made allegations about a double standard in discipline.