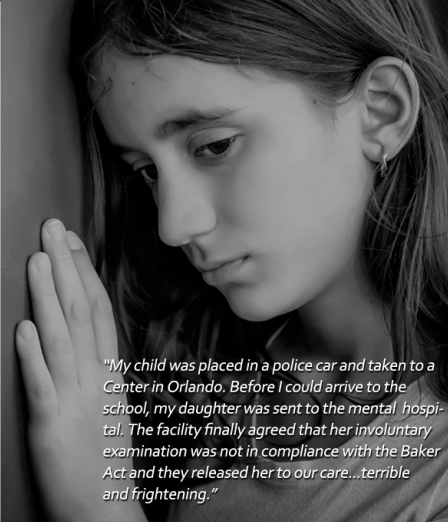


# Mental Health Watchdog Strengthens Campaign to Protect Children from Unjust Involuntary Psychiatric Examination

*CCHR is asking Florida legislators to amend the mental health law so that parents are contacted before an involuntary examination is initiated on a child.*

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, November 8, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Encouraged by a change to the mental health law earlier this year that now requires a minor to be examined within 12 hours after arriving at a psychiatric facility during a [Baker Act](#), the [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\) of Florida](#) has strengthened their campaign to restore parental rights and protect children from unnecessary involuntary examination.



**Normal Childhood Behavior is not a Mental Illness**

**INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENT of MINORS**

Children have tantrums and teenagers have dramatic moments. This behavior can be misinterpreted as signs of mental illness.

These specifically are not criteria for Baker Acting a child and are excluded from the definition of mental illness in the state of Florida.

**Protect Children's Rights and Ensure Parental Involvement**

Citizens Commission On Human Rights  
Call 800.782.2878, for more information  
[www.cchrflorida.org](http://www.cchrflorida.org)

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*"My child was placed in a police car and taken to a Center in Orlando. Before I could arrive to the school, my daughter was sent to the mental hospital. The facility finally agreed that her involuntary examination was not in compliance with the Baker Act and they released her to our care...terrible and frightening."*

The Florida chapter of CCHR, a non-profit mental health watchdog working to expose human rights violations in the field of mental health and dedicated to the protection of children, is asking state legislators to amend the current mental health law so that parents are contacted before an involuntary psychiatric examination is initiated on a child.

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Parents should be contacted before a child is Baker Acted and sent for an involuntary psychiatric examination. To do otherwise is a gross violation of human rights.”  
*Diane Stein, President of CCHR Florida*

The mental health law in Florida, commonly referred to as the Baker Act, is named after Maxine Baker, the former State Representative from Miami who sponsored the Act, after serving as chairperson of the House Committee on Mental Health. While the original intent of this Act was to ensure patient rights and prevent abuse, the Annual Report of Baker Act Data, revealed in March of this year that 32,475 minors were sent for examination during fiscal

year 2015 to 2016. Additionally in Florida, it is legal for a child to be Baker Acted without notifying a parent until after a child has already been taken into custody under the law.

Concerned over the surge in the number of children being Baker Acted annually, CCHR completed an analysis of the calls they have received from parents of children in Florida who had been sent for involuntary psychiatric examination over the past eighteen months. This analysis revealed that 70 percent of these children did not meet the criteria for an involuntary examination and yet they were still transported to a psychiatric facility, where up until the change in the law earlier this year, they could be held for up to 72 hours.

"It is our opinion that the parent or legal guardian should be contacted for the purpose of obtaining consent for a voluntary examination before Baker Acting a child," stated Diane Stein, President of CCHR Florida.

This violation of human rights is happening to children as young as six years of age who are being Baker Acted without parental knowledge. A BuzzFeed investigative news report titled "HOW A 6-YEAR-OLD GOT LOCKED ON A PSYCH WARD" illustrates the abusive use of the Baker Act and the undermining of parental rights in Florida.

According to Florida Statutes, one of the criteria that must be met is that a person has refused voluntary examination after conscientious explanation and disclosure of the purpose of the examination, yet this important step is omitted during the Baker Acting of a child.

CCHR's campaign to eliminate inappropriate [Baker Acting of children](#) educates parents on their rights while providing them with a form they can fill out and file with their child's school to help protect them from an unjust involuntary psychiatric examination. This form uses existing state law to help protect parental rights and can be downloaded on the CCHR Florida website at <http://www.cchrflorida.org/florida-non-consent-forms/>. Additionally, any person living in Florida who is interested in protecting children from abusive Baker Acting are encouraged to sign a petition to stop the involuntary examination of children without parental knowledge at <https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/protect-children-from-baker-act>. For more information on this campaign please contact CCHR at 727-442-8820 or visit the center at 109 N. Fort Harrison Ave in Clearwater, Florida.

About CCHR: Initially established by the Church of Scientology and renowned psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Szasz in 1969, CCHR's mission is to eradicate abuses committed under the guise of mental health and enact patient and consumer protections. It was L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, who brought the terror of psychiatric imprisonment to the notice of the world. In March 1969, he said, "Thousands and thousands are seized without process of law, every week, over the 'free world' tortured, castrated, killed. All in the name of 'mental health.'" For more information please visit [www.cchrflorida.org](http://www.cchrflorida.org)

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