

Mental Health Watchdog Applauds Miami-Dade's Response to Baker Acting of 7-Year Old

CCHR applauds Miami-Dade's response to the Baker Acting of a 7-year-old child earlier this year and calls for other counties in the state to follow their lead.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, February 20, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) of Florida, a non-profit mental health watchdog dedicated to exposing human rights violations, and protecting children, applauds Miami-Dade's recent response to the illegal use of the [Baker Act](#) against a 7-year-old child earlier this year and is calling for other counties in the state to follow their example.

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.

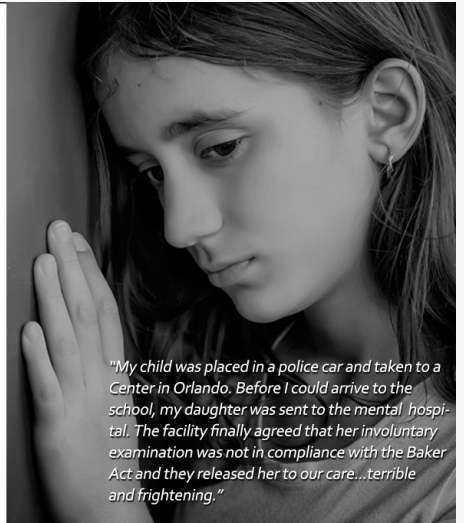
These specifically are not criteria for Baker Acting a child and are excluded from the definition of mental illness in the state of Florida.



Protect Children's Rights and Ensure Parental Involvement

Citizens Commission On Human Rights
Call 800.782.2878, for more information
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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."

Normal Childhood Behavior is not a Mental Illness

Earlier this year a 7-year-old boy in the Miami-Dade school district was handcuffed and transported from his school, in a police car, to a psychiatric facility for involuntary examination all without his family's consent[1]. Citing Florida's mental health law, known as the Baker Act, school authorities claimed the boy's tantrum — resulting in him hitting and kicking a teacher — justified the [Baker Acting](#) of this child. As a result the young boy was handcuffed and transported to a psychiatric facility and held for examination despite the fact that he did not meet the documented requirements to be Baker Acted in the first place.

“

With Miami-Dade implementing policy to prevent abusive Baker Acting of children, we are calling upon all school districts to implement similar policy to protect children and restore parental rights.”

Diane Stein, President CCHR Florida

The Baker Act was originally enacted to protect patient rights and prevent the unlawful and unjust involuntary commitment of citizens in Florida. Unfortunately, the Baker Act has become a source of human rights abuse resulting in over 190,000 Baker Act initiations in a single year. In the case of children, the Baker Act currently allows a child to be taken into custody and transported by law enforcement without parental

knowledge or consent[2]. The abusive use of this law resulted in over 32,475 Baker Act initiations of children who were sent for psychiatric examination during the fiscal year of 2015 to 2016[3].

In response to nationwide outrage with the handcuffing of the 7-year old boy, Miami-Dade's Superintendent Alberto Carvalho issued a new policy on February 10th that requires school teachers and authorities to exhaust all other behavioral management options before calling the Baker Act phone number to request police intervention. Moreover, if the school's police are called, the responding officers will first need to obtain approval from a lieutenant or other higher-ranking officer

before officially transporting a child under the Baker Act. This new policy also addresses that the use of handcuffs is not necessary for children, except in rare instances when a child might aggressively resist an officer[4].

With Miami-Dade now implementing positive policy to restore rights and prevent the excessive Baker Acting of children, [CCHR Florida](http://www.cchrflorida.org) is calling upon all school districts to implement similar policy to protect children and restore parental rights across the state. Anyone living in Florida who is interested in protecting children from abusive Baker Acting are encouraged to sign this petition to stop the involuntary examination of children without parental knowledge:

<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/protect-children-from-baker-act>. For more information on the Baker Act, rescuing children from psychiatric facilities, or obtaining educational materials for yourself or an organization, please call CCHR Florida at 727-442-8820, or visit www.cchrflorida.org.

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 visit, www.cchrflorida.org

1. <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article197039799.html>
2. <http://www.cchrflorida.org/question-and-answers-about-the-florida-involuntary-commitment-law-the-baker-act/>
3. www.usf.edu/cbcs/baker-act/documents/annual_report.pdf
4. <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/education/article199487584.html>

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This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>



Who Speaks for the Child?

INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENT of MINORS

Parents or legal guardians should be given the opportunity to take full responsibility for their child, as stated in the Baker Act criteria, for the purpose of obtaining consent for a voluntary examination prior to Baker Acting.

The Baker Act Criteria clearly allows for a person to be assisted through the help of willing family members or friends or the provision of other services instead of being Baker Acted.

It's the parent's right to be a voice for their child. This is NOT being done. The parent finds out AFTER their child has been Baker Acted.



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Who Speaks for the Child?

Florida Children at Risk

INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENT of MINORS

In 2005-2006 the Florida Senate published an Interim Project Report clarifying the Baker Act requirements. The alarming concern was that children were being held in receiving facilities for extended periods of time. It was not until 2017, that the mental health act was amended to expedite the examination of children from 72 hours to 12 hours.

Since publication of the Senate Report, over 295,000 minors, some as young as 5, were sent for involuntary examination – many taken from their school without parental knowledge of the initiation.

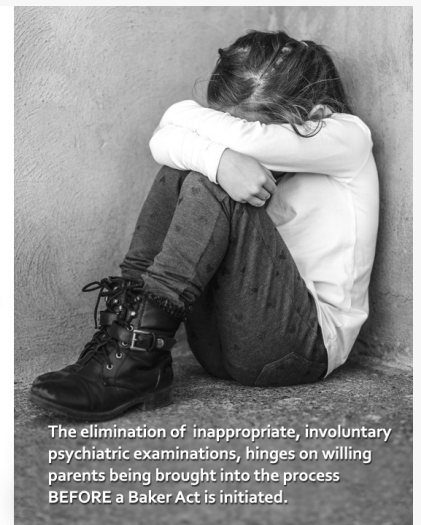
A significant percentage did not meet the criteria of the Florida Statute for Baker Acting in the first place, thus, inappropriate involuntary psychiatric commitment.



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Florida's Children at Risk



The elimination of inappropriate, involuntary psychiatric examinations, hinges on willing parents being brought into the process BEFORE a Baker Act is initiated.

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