

Mental Health Watchdog asks Florida Lawmakers to Protect Children

CCHR is asking policy makers to change how the mental health law is applied to children to protect children from unjust involuntary psychiatric examinations.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, December 31, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Florida chapter of the international mental health watchdog, [Citizens Commission on Human Rights](#) (CCHR), is asking policy makers to change how the mental health law is applied to children and teens to protect them from unjust involuntary psychiatric examinations.

According to the most recent report released by the [Baker Act](#) Reporting Center, there were over 32,000 involuntary psychiatric examinations initiated on children in Florida during 2017. The mental health law for the state, commonly called the Baker Act allows for a person of any age to be taken into custody and transported to a psychiatric receiving facility for examination and this includes children as young as two years of age. [1]

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The Baker Act is being used incorrectly and children who do not meet the criteria are unjustly taken into custody for psychiatric examinations.”

Diane Stein, President CCHR Florida

With it being disclosed during a meeting of the Baker Act Task Force in 2017 that 30 percent of the minor Baker Acts in Pinellas County alone did not meet the criteria, CCHR believes adoption of policy to bring parents and guardians into the process before a child is put through the trauma of a Baker Act only makes sense. [2]

Over the past few years CCHR has helped to make changes to the Baker Act specifically for the purpose of protecting children including changes in how long a Baker Act

Receiving Facility has to initiate an examination on a child reducing it from 72 hours to 12 hours. Stating that the trauma experienced by a child, especially a very young child, needs to be taken into consideration by those who have the authority to send children for an [involuntary psychiatric examination](#), CCHR is asking policy makers to amend the law to clearly spell out the procedure for Baker Acting a child.

“The Baker Act is being used incorrectly. A large number of children who do not meet the criteria are unjustly being Baker Acted and this abuse comes with long term ramifications for that child and the family,” stated Diane Stein, President CCHR Florida.

Currently parents and legal guardians are being left out of the process only finding out that their



The headquarters for CCHR Florida are located in downtown Clearwater

child has been Baker Acted after initiation and usually after the child has been transported by law enforcement to a psychiatric facility. CCHR believes that this is a rights violation, a belief that is shared by Sheriffs, Police Chiefs and even School Districts across Florida.

Since 2017, CCHR has been working to educate those granted the power to initiate a Baker Act on why a parent or guardian should be brought into the process before initiation resulting in county and city level policy changes, mostly within law enforcement, to contact the parents of a child before initiating a Baker Act.

"This policy adoption is helping to protect children and reducing the number of illegal Baker Acts where a child does not meet the criteria to be sent for involuntary psychiatric examination," said Ms. Stein.

Those interested in learning more about CCHR's campaign to protect children from abusive Baker Acting are encouraged to call 800-782-2878.

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. L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, first brought psychiatric imprisonment to wide public notice: "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,'" he wrote in March 1969. For more information visit www.cchrflorida.org

Sources:

[1] Baker Act Reporting Center

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/publications/The%20Baker%20Act%20-%20FL%20MH%20Act%20-%20FY%2016-17%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Released%20June%202018.pdf>

[2] CHILDREN'S BAKER ACT TASK FORCE, MINUTES for FIRST MEETING 7.20.17

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/samh/mentalhealth/task-force-examination-minors/docs/20170720/20170720-minutes.pdf>



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.



Protect Children's Rights and Ensure Parental Involvement

Citizens Commission On Human Rights
Call 800.782.2878, for more information
www.cchrflorida.org

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The Florida chapter of CCHR is a non-profit mental health watchdog dedicated to the protection of children.

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