

CCHR, Mental Health Industry Watchdog, Rails Against Use of Commitment Laws That Detain Patients for Profit

A CCHR report on behavioral health facilities highlights how the lack of accountability has contributed to fraud in the \$220 billion-a-year industry.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, October 28, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Involuntary commitment laws are being used to detain mental health patients for profit, with the [Citizens Commission on Human Rights](#) (CCHR) saying the system needs to be overhauled and stringent penalties put in place to stem the fraud and abuse. The group applauds the now frequent media coverage of the dangers of commitment laws and patient harm that can ensue, especially in for-profit psychiatric hospitals.

Axios, an online media service, recently featured an article on the issue, headlining it "The dark side of psychiatric hospitals." It reported: "There are plenty of horror stories about mental health patients caught in abusive or predatory situations." Lack of government oversight has ensured a lack of accountability; the article points out. Since 2015, CCHR has sent thousands of complaints to legislators across the country asking for increased oversight. [1]

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We want to see regulations that provide better oversight with greater criminal and civil penalties for violations of patient rights and fraud.”
Citizens Commission on Human Rights

Facilities can exploit patients’ vulnerability in order to drive profits higher, Axios stated. It cited:

- An investigation of North Tampa Behavioral Health, an Acadia-owned psychiatric hospital that “makes huge profits by exploiting patients held under Florida’s mental health law,” the Baker Act, according to the Tampa Bay Times. The facility “uses loopholes in the statute to hold them longer

than allowed, running up their bills while they are powerless to fight back.” Hospital charges can be up to \$1,500 per night. Keeping patients one additional night can create an additional \$1.4 million in annual revenue. [2]

- The Seattle Times reported on 10 private psychiatric hospitals in Washington that have a series of safety issues, and instances of hospitals trying to keep voluntary patients from leaving. [3]



A CCHR International report on behavioral health facilities published last year highlights how the lack of science, medically sound diagnoses and unworkable treatments in psychiatry have escaped accountability and contributed to the fraud.

•WXYZ 7 Action News accused the state of Michigan of failing to investigate the suicide deaths of four patients released by Acadia Healthcare's psychiatric facility StoneCrest Center in Detroit. [4] CCHR adds that the treatment clearly didn't prevent the four suicides and any investigation should include whether psychotropic drugs or other psychiatric treatments may have contributed to the deaths.

•WPTV Contact 5 in Florida also recently uncovered that two veteran suicides happened within two weeks of each other inside the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center earlier this year, along with one attempted suicide-by-cop. Florida's Rep. Brian Mast is now asking the Inspector General to investigate. [5]

•The Chicago Tribune reported that a 13-year-old girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by an 18-year-old fellow patient on April 15. Both were residents of Sequel Youth & Family Services psychiatric facility, Northern Illinois Academy in Aurora that treats 6 to 21-year olds. [6]

•Psychiatric facilities have used "telemedicine" to detain patients against their will; one woman visited a facility as a voluntary patient and without her knowledge a "doctor" whom she never saw or spoke with recommended her incarceration and she could not leave.

•WFAA News in Texas reported that a mother took her 11-year-old son to Millwood psychiatric hospital but the boy was detained without her consent. WFAA News detailed: "[T]he door locks behind you. You're told you can't leave. Stripped of your clothes, given a new bed. You have no idea when you'll see your family again." The facility billed his mother's insurance company more than \$11,000 for the unwanted stay. [7]

Between 2009 and 2012, states cut \$5 billion in mental health services but that meant private companies could take over the industry, create compelling investment opportunities, and reap the profits—sometimes by 20% to 30%. [8]

This has been a problem for decades. In 1991, The New York Times reported how private psychiatric hospitals had "exploded into a highly profitable \$4 billion industry" in the previous five years. It pointed to the civil and criminal investigations into allegations of "improper treatment of patients" and quoted Carl Sherman, a hospital-industry analyst with Dillon, Read &



CCHR's mission is to eradicate abuses committed under the guise of mental health and enact patient and consumer protections.



Company, commenting: "The psychiatric hospitals used to be like a kid in the candy store," said. "They could keep patients as long as they wanted and charge anything they liked." [9] CCHR says nothing has changed.

Psychiatrist, Dr. John S. Montgomery hit the nail on the head when he told the Times "Our treatment is so much on the side of art rather than science." [10]

A [CCHR International report on behavioral health facilities](#) published last year highlights how the lack of science, medically sound diagnoses and unworkable treatments in psychiatry have escaped accountability and contributed to the fraud. Behavioral health is now a \$220 billion-a-year industry. An estimated 10 to 20% of state mental health funds are lost to fraud, waste, and excess profits to for-profit managed care companies—representing \$4 billion-\$8 billion. [11]

CCHR wants to see regulations that provide better oversight with (1) Greater criminal and civil penalties for violations of patient rights and fraud, including patient safety infringements; (2) Police investigation and prosecution of patient restraint deaths; and (3) Tougher penalties for fraudulent billing practices, including cancellation of federal and state funding and hospital closures for repeated abuse and/or fraud. [Report psychiatric abuse or fraud to CCHR](#). For more information visit www.cchrflorida.org or call 727-442-8820.

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.

Sources:

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The headquarters for CCHR Florida are located in downtown Clearwater.



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

[2] <https://projects.tampabay.com/projects/2019/investigations/north-tampa-behavioral-health/>

[3] Op. cit., Axios

[4] "State didn't investigate psych patient deaths after release from Detroit hospital," WXYZ News, 18 Oct. 2019,

<https://www.wxyz.com/news/local-news/investigations/when-patients-died-after-release-from-detroit-psych-hospital-state-officials-didnt-investigate>

[5] "South Florida lawmaker wants investigation into suicides at West Palm Beach VA Medical Center," WPTV News, 16 Oct. 2019, <https://www.wptv.com/news/local-news/investigations/south-florida-lawmaker-wants-investigation-into-suicides-at-west-palm-beach-va-medical-center>

[6] "13-year-old girl sexually assaulted while on field trip at Aurora Public Library, prosecutors say," The Chicago Tribune and Aurora Beacon News, 17 Oct. 2019,

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[7] Charlotte Huffman, Mark Smith, Jason Trahan, "Against Their Will: Locked away in a mental hospital after voluntarily seeking help," WFAA News 8, 29 Jun. 2018,

<https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/investigates/against-their-will-locked-away-in-a-mental-hospital-after-voluntarily-seeking-help/287-520570575>

[8] Cost of not caring: Nowhere to go THE FINANCIAL AND HUMAN TOLL FOR NEGLECTING THE MENTALLY ILL. Liz Szabo, USA TODAY Published 4:14 p.m. ET May 12, 2014 | Updated 5:58 p.m. ET Jan. 12, 2015 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/05/12/mental-health-system-crisis/7746535/>

[9] "The Squeeze on Psychiatric Hospital Chains," The New York Times, 26 Oct. 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/10/26/business/the-squeeze-on-psychiatric-chains.html>

[10] Ibid.

[11] "Fraud, Waste and Excess Profits," Psychiatric Times, 18 Nov. 2015,

<http://www.psychiatristimes.com/cultural-psychiatry/fraud-waste-and-excess-profits>

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