

Calls for Baker Act Reform Continue to Leave Parents Out of the Solution

Recent media on the Baker Acting of children spurred calls for reformation yet the most obvious solution of bringing parents into the process is being ignored.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The mental health law in Florida, commonly called the [Baker Act](#), allows for anyone, no matter their age, to be taken into custody for an involuntary psychiatric examination. This includes children and during 2017-2018 there were a staggering 36,078 involuntary psychiatric examinations initiated on children across the state according to the Baker Act Reporting Center. Even more disturbing is that over 4,000 of these Baker Acts involved children 10 and younger. [1]



During 2017-2018 there were a staggering 36,078 involuntary psychiatric examinations initiated on children across the state.

According to the Florida chapter of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), the police cam recording of one calm, well-mannered 6-year-old child being sent to a psychiatric facility which shocked viewers across the United States and made international news in February is an all too common occurrence. [2]

“

Improper Baker Acting of children in Florida has been going on for decades and the fundamental right of a parent to help their child is being disregarded in Florida.”

Diane Stein, President CCHR Florida

“Unfortunately, what happened to this little girl is not an isolated incident,” stated Diane Stein, President of CCHR Florida. “Improper Baker Acting of children in Florida has been going on for decades.”

While the number of children Baker Acted has been steadily climbing for the past 17 years, the trauma suffered and the resultant harm to children and their families has only recently become the subject of extensive media

coverage on local, national and international news. [1,2,3,4]

This increased news coverage may be one reason why, for the last 3 years, bills have come before Florida legislators to protect children from unjust, involuntary examination in a psychiatric receiving facility, a Baker Act. These bills, meant to give parents the right to protect their children from the trauma of a Baker Act incident, among other protections, have never made it through to become law.

Multiple bills presented this session once again attempted to address this situation by requiring

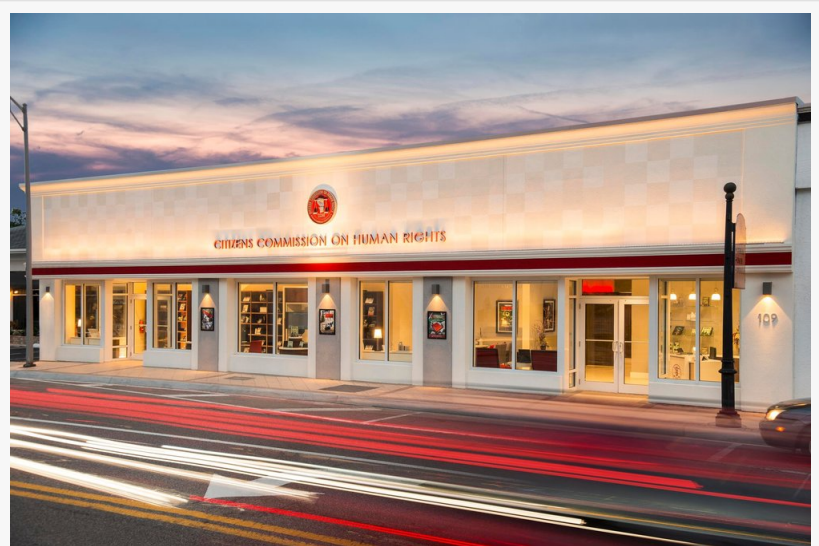
parental notification prior to the initiation of a Baker Act and in doing so give parents and caregivers the opportunity to help their child. As the law currently stands, a parent does not have to be notified before their child is taken from school, often in a police vehicle, and at times in handcuffs, for an involuntary psychiatric examination. However, the law does allow for a person in crisis to be helped by “willing family members or friends”. Unfortunately, this common sense approach to reducing the number of unnecessary child Baker Acts was once again ignored and left out of legislative solutions to the problem with none of the bills this session requiring parental notification making it out of committee. [5]

“The fundamental right of a parent to help their child is being disregarded in Florida,” said Diane Stein. “Several bills proposed over the last three years would have gone far to protect children in the state from improper mental health intervention and restore parental rights but these bills languished in committees.”

CCHR believes that while the current law, if executed correctly, would allow for a parent to be brought into the process before a Baker Act, it needs to be amended to specifically state that a parent, legal guardian or caregiver should be notified as a first course of action.

A barrier to this change appears to be the mistaken belief that the existing law already covers parental notification, but this notification is only after a Baker Act is initiated and the child must be taken into custody and transported to a psychiatric ward. In other words, under current law, notification is too late for the parents to take any effective action to help their child.

Misconceptions surrounding the Baker Act are common place and spurred CCHR to launch an educational campaign to inform families of their rights under the mental health law. Through the use of free workshops, seminars and mailings CCHR has educated over 220,000 families across Florida and vows to continue pressing legislators to amend the law to require parental notification prior to the initiation of a Baker Act on a child. For more information on the Baker Act, [your rights as a parent](#) or to [report abuse](#) please call 800-782-2878.



The headquarters for CCHR Florida are located in downtown Clearwater.



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

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 please visit www.cchrflorida.org.

Sources:

[1] The Baker Act, The Florida Mental Health Act Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Annual Report, Released June 2018 - Prepared for the Florida Department of Children and Families by the Baker Act Reporting Center

https://www.usf.edu/cbcs/baker-act/documents/ba_usf_annual_report_2017_2018.pdf

[2] 6-year-old Florida girl "traumatized" after being involuntarily sent to mental health facility

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/florida-baker-act-6-year-old-girl-sent-to-mental-health-facility-by-school/>

[3] Woman upset after officer Baker Acted 9-year-old son

<http://www.wftv.com/news/local/woman-upset-after-officer-baker-acted-9-year-old-s/107160305>

[4] Florida's flawed Baker Act rips thousands of kids from school

<https://www.tampabay.com/news/education/2019/12/10/floridas-flawed-baker-act-rips-thousands-of-kids-from-school/>

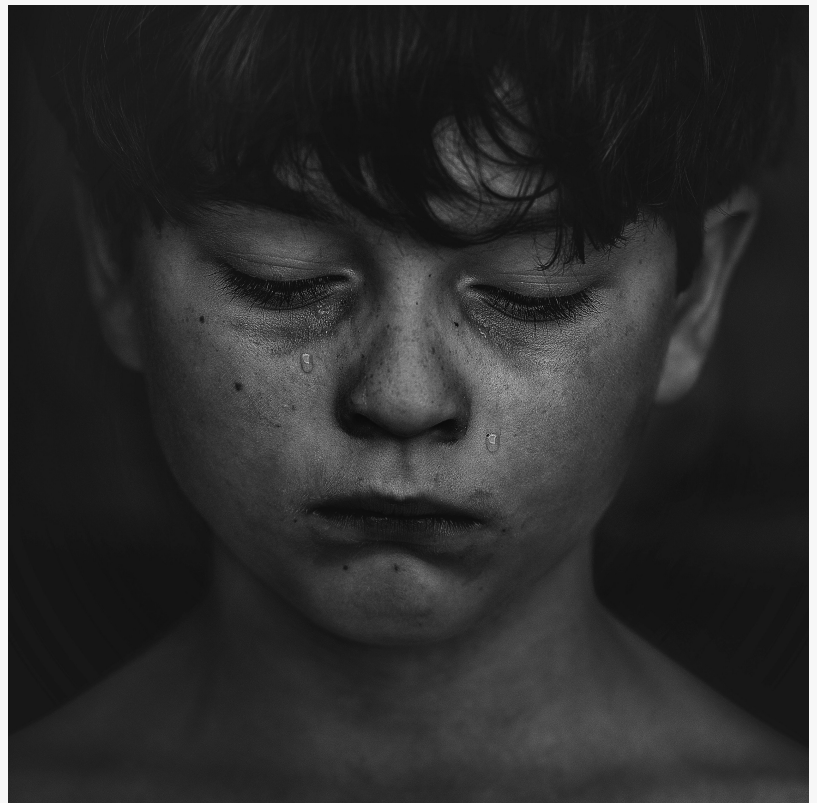
[5] Florida Involuntary Examination Criteria

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=0300-0399/0394/0394.html

Diane Stein
Citizens Commission on Human Rights of Florida
+1 727-422-8820
[email us here](#)
Visit us on social media:
[Facebook](#)



Florida law allows for a child of any age to be taken into custody and sent for an involuntary psychiatric examination.



It was reported during the Baker Act Task Force that an estimated 30% of the children being Baker Acted in Pinellas County alone did not meet the criteria.

Twitter
LinkedIn

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

Disclaimer: If you have any questions regarding information in this press release please contact the company listed in the press release. Please do not contact EIN Presswire. We will be unable to assist you with your inquiry. EIN Presswire disclaims any content contained in these releases. © 1995-2020 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.