

Tens of Thousands of Children Detained for Involuntary Psychiatric Examination Annually

In Florida, there were more than 36,000 involuntary psychiatric examinations of children during 2018.

CLEARWATER, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, July 29, 2020

/EINPresswire.com/ -- The number of children taken into custody for an involuntary psychiatric examination has been steadily increasing in Florida for almost two decades and according to the Florida chapter of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), this steady increase is indicative of the abusive use of the mental health law. Commonly referred to as the [Baker Act](#), the mental health law in Florida allows for anyone, including children, to be detained under an emergency psychiatric hold and per the Baker Act Reporting Center there were more than 200,000 holds in 2018 with over 36,000 involving children. [1]

During 2018 there were over 36,000 involuntary psychiatric examinations, a Baker Act, initiated on children in Florida.

[#FLParentsRights](#)

Baker Act



The fundamental right of a parent to help their child is being ignored despite the fact that there is an existing provision for the parent to be given an opportunity to help their child as part of the Baker Act law.

"For years the media has been covering the fact that children are being handcuffed and taken to psychiatric wards for examination without the parents even knowing what is happening," stated the president of CCHR in Florida, Diane Stein. "This is a violation of parental rights."

News coverage of children, some as young as 6 years old, being Baker Acted may be one reason why year after year bills have come before Florida legislators to restore parental rights and protect children from this abuse. These bills attempted to address this situation by requiring parental notification prior to the initiation of a Baker Act but to date none have passed. [2,3,4]

As currently written, the law does allow for a person in crisis to be helped by "willing family members or friends" however, parents are not being brought into the process before a child is taken from school, usually in handcuffs and by law enforcement. Contacting the parents and

giving them an opportunity to help their child seems logical yet this common sense approach to reducing the number of unnecessary child Baker Acts is being ignored and left out of legislative solutions. [5]

CCHR, a [mental health watchdog](#) organization, believes that the law needs to be amended to specifically state that a parent, legal guardian or caregiver should be notified as a first course of action.

“The fundamental right of a parent to help their child is being ignored despite the fact that there is an existing provision for the parent to be given an opportunity to help their child as part of the Baker Act law,” stated Diane Stein.

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.

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*Diane Stein, President CCHR
Florida*

Misconceptions surrounding the Baker Act and uncertainty on parental rights in general, prompted CCHR Florida to launch a campaign to educate families, school districts and law enforcement on these rights. Having reached hundreds of thousands with this campaign, CCHR has pledged to continue fighting for an amendment to the Baker Act and for a [Parents Bill of Rights](#) to be created in Florida statutes. For more information on the Baker Act, your rights as a parent or to report abuse please call 800-782-2878 or visit www.cchrflorida.org.



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.

Sources:

[1] The Baker Act, The Florida Mental Health Act Fiscal Year 2017/2018 Annual Report

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

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The headquarters for CCHR Florida are located in downtown Clearwater.



As reported by the Baker Act Reporting Center, an astounding 36,078 involuntary psychiatric examinations were initiated on children across the state.



Involuntary examinations are being initiated on children without parental knowledge. The parent finds out AFTER their child has been Baker Acted.

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/522747621>

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