

Mental Health Watchdog Hosts Baker Act Continuing Education Course in Campaign to Protect Citizens from Abuse

The virtual course identifies the basic human rights impacted by the Baker Act, areas of abuse and the unintended consequences.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Almost 25 years ago the Florida Supreme Court issued an Executive Summary following a review of the use of the [Baker Act](#). In this report, the Supreme Court noted that “the state is the only entity with the authority to restrict a person's liberty. Involuntary mental health examination and placement involve a balancing of individual rights with the state's authority and police powers”

and that based on the 22.3 percent increase in Baker Acts from 1996 to 1997 that “implementation of the statutory provisions governing involuntary examination and placement, and the accompanying deprivation of liberty, affect a large number of Floridians every year.” [1]

Unfortunately, not much has changed over the past quarter century with more than 210,000 Baker Acts initiated during 2018/2019 across the state. [2]

While in the 90s the focus was primarily on the Baker Acting of the elderly, it is now children that are the fastest growing segment of the population affected by involuntary psychiatric examination. [3] Commonly called the Baker Act, the Florida mental health law has been a source of statewide abuse as reported repeatedly in the media. Headlines such as “6-year-old Florida girl “traumatized” after being involuntarily sent to mental health facility” and “Florida’s flawed Baker Act rips thousands of kids from school” are all too frequent and tell the stories of children and families that have suffered Baker Act abuse. [4]



Tampa Bay area attorney and former Assistant Public Defender of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Carmen Miller, Esq., was the featured speaker at the seminar on mental health rights.

Spurred into action by these stories and thousands of calls received from victims of Baker Act abuse, the [Citizens Commission on Human Rights \(CCHR\)](#), a mental health watchdog, decided to begin offering continuing education on the law. After first receiving approval to host continuing education through the Florida Bar on the Baker Act for attorneys, the move to become a provider through the Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling was a logical next step.



This past weekend, CCHR held a complimentary course delivered by attorney Carmen Miller, a former assistant public defender in the Thirteenth Circuit in Tampa, with an extensive background in dealing with Baker Acts. Those in attendance learned the context and intentions of the mental health law as well as the basic human rights impacted by the Baker Act and its unintended consequences.

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Diane Stein, President CCHR Florida

“The education of those given the power to initiate a Baker Act on the points of the law is vital to the protection of liberty and human rights,” states the president of CCHR Florida, Diane Stein. “If the law itself is understood and applied from the viewpoint of using the least restrictive means possible to help someone in crisis then the potential for abuse is greatly reduced.”

The Baker Act allows for individuals of all ages, including children, to be taken into custody and sent for an involuntary psychiatric examination and the most recent report shows over 37,000 initiations during 2018/2019 involved children and over 4,000 involved children 10 years of age and younger. [2]

Even more disturbing is that during a meeting of the Children’s Baker Act Task Force, it was revealed that a significant number of children sent for an involuntary psychiatric examination did not meet the criteria to be taken into custody. Unfortunately, this is not new information. CCHR Florida has been reporting on this alarming trend for years. [5]

“The law makes a point of noting that a person does not meet the criteria for a Baker Act if the perceived harm can be avoided through the willing help of family yet parents are not being

called and given an opportunity to help their child," said Diane Stein. "This is a gross violation of parental rights and a main reason we decided to offer continuing education on the mental health law."

The virtual continuing education course is designed for Licensed Mental Health Counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Marriage Family Therapists and Certified Master Social Workers and offers 3 CE credits for completion of this course. To learn more or to reserve a spot for this complimentary virtual course, please 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. For more information visit www.cchrflorida.org

Sources:

[1] Florida Supreme Court Baker Act Executive Summary

<https://www.floridasupremecourt.org/content/download/242846/file/BakerSummary.pdf>

[2] Baker Act Reporting Center https://www.usf.edu/cbcs/baker-act/documents/ba_usf_annual_report_2018_2019.pdf

[3] WUSF Health News Florida COMMITTED <https://wfsu.org/committed/>

[4] Baker Act Abuse – Media Stories <https://www.cchrflorida.org/baker-act-abuse/>



Currently there is the equivalent of one hundred Baker Acts initiated on a child every day of the year. Many of these children never met the criteria established to protect the rights and liberties of citizens imprisoned by the Baker Act and many who are



As reported by the Baker Act Reporting Center, an astounding 37,882 involuntary psychiatric examinations were initiated on children across the state.

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

<https://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/samh/involuntary-examination-minors/docs/20170720/20170720-minutes.pdf>

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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/535760822>

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