

# San Marcos DAILY RECORD

## Strip search story 'not true'; phone calls jam HCSO system

By Anita Miller

News Editor

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— Administrative lines at the Hays County Sheriff's Office and the Hays CISD were swamped Wednesday afternoon with angry callers responding to a situation that didn't even occur, officials said a day later. The allegations were that an eight-year-old girl at a Buda elementary school was strip-searched; but both the Sheriff's Department and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services say it isn't so.

"We don't strip search children and we didn't strip search a child this week," said Chris Van Deusen, spokesman for the state agency.

"The calls started coming in about 2:30," said Sheriff's spokesman Leroy Opiela. "It just went crazy."

Opiela said the furor arose after the case was discussed on an Austin radio talk show, and that the mother of the girl involved works for the show host Alex Jones.

"Her daughter goes to Buda Elementary, and CPS (Child Protective Services) came over Tuesday, and as they always do when they do anything they call us and one of our deputies went with them," Opiela said.

"They asked the child a bunch of questions and the deputy was in the room when that happened. They wanted to examine the child because she had a bruise and they asked the deputy to leave the room and he did. It seems like everything was cool until the mother said something to Alex Jones."

Opiela said he doesn't know where the information about the bruise came from but noted that "by law, they (school officials) have to report it to CPS. CPS was just out there trying to verify that it's not child abuse, or verify that it was, one way or the other. They accused of us of strip searching a second grade student and that's completely false."

Julie Jerome, assistant superintendent of Information, communications and student services for the Hays CISD, said school personnel had "responded appropriately" to comments made by the child.

"Anytime we get a report of child abuse or neglect, obviously, we have to investigate," Van Deusen said.

"Sometimes we will initiate this by talking to the child at school. Usually that happens with some school personnel present, and as with any investigation we want to interview the victim and then possible witnesses to determine what happened. If there's an allegation of injury we will ask to see the injury. It's all voluntary, never anything that's forced."

Opiela said he couldn't recall anything like the response the radio show drew.

"It jammed up all the admin lines here in our building. It tied up all the operators answering calls."

He said a few calls came in on Thursday as well.

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