



## Notes from San Augustine County Judge, Samye Johnson

### A CHILD IN TROUBLE

According to Texas law, anyone who thinks a child is being abused, neglected, or exploited **MUST** report it to Department of Family Protective Services.

A person who reports abuse in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability. DFPS keeps the name of the person making the report confidential. Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony. Time frames for investigating reports are based on the severity of the allegations. Reporting suspected abuse makes it possible for a family to get help.

TDFPS'S 2012 annual report data for San Augustine County is as follows; 1) **Fifteen**, the number of alleged victims who received services. 2) **Ninety-one**, the number of alleged victims who were not provided services. 5) **One**, the number of children removed from the home.

TDFPS's annual report provides comprehensive data and statistics. However, it does not provide detailed information at the county level. In order to better understand the local issues of child abuse, input was sought from those who are knowledgeable about child protective services in East Texas and San Augustine County. We have learned that the majority of the child abuse cases in San Augustine County involve Caucasian children who are 13 years of age or younger and live in poverty.

One of the most common perceptions among TDFPS employees is that 90% or more of the child neglect/abuse cases in East Texas involves parental substance abuse. Reported cases of child abuse/neglect also typically involve; 1) physical abuse, 2) domestic violence, 3) criminal activity, 4) unemployment, 5) lack of support, and 6) limited parenting skills.

Child welfare and law enforcement professionals agree that San Augustine County's relatively low occurrence rates of child abuse/neglect is due to underreporting, not from lack of need. To make a report, **call 800-252-5400**.