Legal Literacy for Community Education, Policy Advocacy, Resource Development and More

- Antony H. Barash, ABA Commission on Disaster Preparedness, Chicago, IL
- Sue Encherman, Northwest Justice Project, Seattle, WA
- Steven B. Scudder, ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, Chicago, IL

Presenters will engage attendees in an exciting discussion for how to use legal literacy as a powerful tool for serving your clients and enhancing your program. They will share ways in which legal literacy strategies and products can be used for client education; staff and volunteer lawyer training; policy advocacy; and institutional development or pro bono, legal services and other non profit organizations. Attendees will learn about "inside the organization" strategizing, potential funding schemes, targeting markets for particular themes in the legal literacy tools, and how to use those tools for a variety of program purposes.
Convincing States to Adopt the New Medicaid Eligibility Category, for example, was the topic of a webinar earlier this fall. Together with the lead article in this issue, this webinar shows how advocates can help realize health care reform.

A New Generation in LEGAL LITERACY


By Jo Watson Hackl

A

s any lawyer who works with low-income people knows, increasing legal literacy can improve lives. Education in legal literacy helps low-income people become effective self-advocates, access available resources, and identify and work with legal professionals to attend to legal problems at their earliest, most easily resolved stage. Yet reaching people who can most benefit from legal literacy efforts is difficult. The target group for the information must be identified. Information about a technical legal topic must be translated into understandable language. The topic must be presented in a way that the audience perceives as relevant. People with legal needs may not perceive a problem as one that has a legal remedy or know how to access the legal system. Disseminating information to target group members in a form they are likely to absorb is another challenge. In the age of twenty-four-hour electronic access to the Internet, social media, and cable television, competing for attention can be difficult. Language barriers are an additional obstacle for many low-income families, whose school-age children often must serve as translators for their parents. These children are unlikely to be interested in or understand even the most user-friendly information on a legal topic. How, then, to reach these families?

This year the American Bar Association took a bold step to increase legal literacy with the publication of A Breath of Hope, its first book specifically designed for children. The book focuses on the plight of a small girl suffering from asthma because of mold in her family’s apartment that the landlord has refused to remediate. The child’s older brother works with a medical-legal partnership to get the mold—the source of the asthma trigger—eradicated. The book is a tool for increasing legal literacy; targets children at an age when they are likely to be receptive to legal literacy efforts; overcomes one of the challenges in reaching households in which the parents do not speak English; and highlights the work of medical-legal partnerships. The book shapes perceptions of lawyers and the judicial system and health care professionals and the health care system, helping create a positive image of them all and thus increasing the likelihood that readers will feel comfortable using these systems. A powerful client and patient education tool, the book has several creative and production choices providing insight into strategies that can strengthen other legal literacy initiatives.

A Breath of Hope was conceived and developed by Anthony Barash, former director of the American Bar Association Center for Pro Bono, while he was a fellow at the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative. In his pro bono work, Barash had observed that many non-English-speaking parents relied upon their school-age children to
serve as translators in interactions with authorities and in seeking resources for their family. To focus legal literacy efforts only on the parents would be to miss an opportunity. Barash set out to create a legal literacy piece that would reach young translators and not only arm them with critical information but also create a sense of hope, self-empowerment, and confidence. After research and investigation, Barash decided to create a piece that would speak to readers in a familiar voice: a children’s picture book. In implementing the project, he went outside traditional legal education channels and worked with Jo S. Kittinger and Chuck Galey. Highly acclaimed, Kittinger is the author of over twenty children’s books, including The House on Dirty-Third Street, Rosa’s Bus: The Ride to Civil Rights, and George Washington Carver. She serves as a coadvisor for the Southern Breeze region (Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi) of the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators, a professional organization. Galey is an award-winning illustrator of over fifty books for young children; his illustrations draw young readers into the story. By reaching out to industry professionals experienced in creating an emotional connection with young readers, Barash ensured that the book would connect with its intended audience. The project is also sustainable and scalable in that its format can be used to educate readers on other legal issues. Barash recently reported that health care providers have requested the book for their waiting rooms, and legal aid programs want to distribute it in their communities. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, and clergy members are suggesting topics for sequels. The book has been translated into Spanish. Barash and his team are at work on their next book, which will explore, through a child’s eyes, mental health advocacy for active-duty military service members and veterans and their families.

I began working on legal literacy in the early 1990s as a volunteer with the Legal Services Agency of Western Carolina (now South Carolina Legal Services) to host and produce a local cable television show educating low-income people about practical topics such as how to avoid scams, how to buy a used car, and how to get a relative into a nursing home. At that time one of our largest challenges was competing for viewer attention with fast-paced entertainment options. This challenge has only intensified in the ensuing years. The format and content of *A Breath of Hope* reveal strategies that can be used even in pieces meant for adult audiences.

*A Breath of Hope* is in hardcover and, at 8 x 10 inches and 32 pages, follows a traditional picture-book format, one likely to be familiar and thus its content trusted by young readers. The hard rather than soft cover conveys quality, durability, and longevity: the book is not some pamphlet to be read and discarded. Instead it is to be read again and again and passed on to others as a treasured gift. The hardcover also lends itself equally well to independent reading by the child or reading on the lap of a caregiver with whom the child might engage in conversation about the book’s topics. And, regardless of how the book is read, the picture-book format allows for exploration of the topics raised in a natural setting as the book is incorporated into established story time and bedtime routines. Introducing the topics in a calm setting, well before any legal or health crisis, is good because “[c]hildren who encounter the law more academically seem to have an easier time establishing a comfortable relationship with it than children who are forced into legal intimacy by a personal crisis.”

The cover, presenting an uplifting image of a brother and sister holding hands and skipping down an urban sidewalk, also fulfills traditional picture-book expectations. The sister looks happily toward her brother, who firmly holds his sister’s hand and gazes ahead, looking toward the reader. The emotions communicated are hope and joy; the reader is invited inside.

The first-person narrative avoids the distant third person and allows read-

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ers to picture themselves in the story. The older brother as the narrator allows the reader to experience the story from the point of view of an active problem-solver, not a victim. The acute accent on “Mamá” and “Papá” suggests a Hispanic family setting. The brother of school age reflects the reality that, in many homes in which English is not the native language, the school-age children are the first generation to master English. The children receive instruction in English in school and often translate for older family members and help them navigate social service resources. With such enormous responsibility, these children naturally might feel overwhelmed and isolated from their school peers from English-speaking homes. By using a narrator to whom many children in immigrant families can relate, the book assures them that others are in the same situation. Making this character the hero of the story also helps instill a sense of pride and confidence in a reader who translates for family members.

The family lives in an old apartment building, a setting well known to low-income readers. Outside scenes feature an urban environment that could be any city neighborhood. Background illustrations are relatively spare. The characters and buildings are rendered realistically, communicating a story set in the real world, not in fantasy. All these elements allow readers to imagine themselves in the setting and as part of the action.

With the first two lines—“I hold Isabel’s hand and hum her favorite song. It doesn’t help. She gasps for each breath”—the reader knows that this caring older brother sees his sister’s asthma from a child’s viewpoint. The siblings convey bonds of love. The brother has been left alone with his younger sister in their apartment while their parents are at work. He faces a dilemma: the first time Isabel is having an asthma attack while in his care. His teacher has told him that he should call 911 in an emergency, but his father has said that ambulances are too expensive unless someone is dying. Isabel is too heavy for him to carry the three blocks to the hospital, so he must find a solution. He decides to use Isabel’s wagon to transport his sister to the hospital. The narrator is portrayed as a decision maker and problem solver. Children’s picture books traditionally feature the child as hero or primary protagonist, and this familiar format reinforces the sense of trust in readers. The narrator in a problem-solving role allows readers to imagine themselves in a similar active role.

Yet the narrator is not left solely to his own devices. At the hospital a nurse praises the narrator for doing a good job of getting Isabel to the hospital. As the doctor examines Isabel, the narrator meets with a hospital employee who asks about conditions in the apartment that might trigger Isabel’s asthma. “You’re an important part of Isabel’s medical team,” she tells him. The woman inquires about mold and describes signs of it in terms that any child can understand: “It looks like black dust growing on the walls or in the carpet.” The narrator explains that the apartment has mold, but the landlord has threatened to raise the rent if he has to remediate the mold. The woman then introduces the narrator to Ms. Bowman, who is part of the hospital’s medical-legal partnership, and “[p]erhaps she can help.” When his mother arrives, the narrator translates for her. She is concerned about how much the hospital will charge for this help, and Ms. Bowman reassures the mother that she works on a pro bono basis—her work is free. Ms. Bowman then visits the home and, observing the water leaks and mold in the carpet, explains that mold is causing Isabel to be sick. Ms. Bowman also explains that the family can use the law to force the landlord to do what is right. Two days later, when the family receives a copy of a letter from Ms. Bowman to the landlord, the narrator says, “I tell Mamá. ‘It says he must make repairs to our apartment and if he tries to raise the rent there will be trouble for him.’” These scenes reinforce the narrator’s role in his family, describe mold in terms that a child can recognize, introduce the concept of medical-legal partnerships, define the term “pro bono” in child-friendly terms, and present the power of the law in a positive, solution-oriented way.
Isabel’s medical problem is not insignificant. The percentage of Americans suffering from asthma reached a record high of 8.4 percent in 2010, up from 7.3 percent in 2001.1 Because asthma is often triggered by environmental conditions, the poor and disadvantaged are disproportionately affected.2 Yet many triggering conditions can be remedied. Through medical-legal partnerships, legal and medical professionals team up to integrate free legal services into health care settings and overcome the social determinants of health that create hardships for impoverished clients. Since the early 1990s, these partnerships have worked on overlapping medical-legal problems such as mental health, housing, and violence.3 In 2011 nearly 300 medical-legal partnership sites served over 50,000 patients and their families.4 In many cases they facilitated remediation of substandard housing conditions to alleviate factors—such as mold—that exacerbate chronic asthma and other respiratory conditions. By focusing the narrative on a medical condition that can be cured through legal intervention, A Breath of Hope indeed offers hope.

Few fiction books for young readers feature lawyers as characters, and “the relative absence of lawyers as characters in children’s books may contribute to the strained relationships children have with lawyers.”5 Introducing the legal system as a friendly ally rather than an enemy, this book helps change that relationship by showing the power of the law to improve a family’s situation and celebrating the role of the child-translator working with legal professionals to produce a positive outcome.

The book ends with a family-centered resolution: “When I come home from school a few days later, workmen are all over our apartment. The carpet is ripped up and I can smell new paint! Goodbye mold!” The cracks in the wall are being repaired and repainted, and family members are embracing one another in the newly repaired apartment—on her father’s lap a happy Isabel being hugged by her mother, the narrator standing at the father’s other side, encircled by his father’s arm. The final page enumerates “Things You Should Know”: gives child-friendly information about renter’s rights and responsibilities, medical-legal partnerships, and legal aid organizations; and lists websites and other resources. With a positive view of the legal system as a force for justice, readers thus are uplifted, celebrated in their role as family translator, and poised to apply the book’s lessons to their own situation.

The presentation, narrative choices, setting, characterization, and story arc together create a tool for legal literacy initiatives. Applied in other settings, these techniques can change perceptions for a new generation.

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2Id.


4Interview with Megan Sandel, M.D., Medical Director, National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership (Oct. 8, 2012).

5DiRusso & Van Campen, supra note 1, at B2.
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The Kids in Building 160
....and Other Strategies for Self-Empowerment Through Legal Literacy
What books did you read as a kid (or did you have read to you) that influenced your values, morals or actions?
WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE
STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

Judy Blume
Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.

H. A. Rey
Curious George

Charlotte's Web
E. B. White
Pictures by Garth Williams

GREEN EGGS AND HAM
Dr. Seuss

LITTLE MISS SHY
by Roger Hargreaves
What is Legal Literacy?

What tools do you use now to educate and empower your client communities?
What does it mean?

The Canadian Bar Association defines legal literacy as the ability to understand words used in a legal context, to draw conclusions from them, and then to use those conclusions to take action.
Reaching People is Difficult

• The target group must be identified.
• Technical legal topic info must be translated into understandable language.
• The topic must be presented in a way that the audience perceives as relevant. People with legal needs may not perceive a problem as one that has a legal remedy or know how to access the legal system.
• Disseminating information in a form they are likely to absorb. Access to the Internet, social media, and cable television, competing for attention can be difficult.
• Language barriers
The Kids in Building 160
a series of children’s books created by
Author Jo S. Kittinger and Illustrator Chuck Galey

A Breath of Hope
Helping a Hero
(ABA Publishing, 2013; Spanish Ed. In production)*
The Beauty of Dreams
(ABA Publishing, 2014)
A Special Friend
(ABA Publishing, 2014; in production)

*Now available on amozon.com.
A Breath of Hope

by Jo S. Kittinger
Illustrated by Chuck Galey
Un aliento de esperanza

Escrito por Jo. S. Kittinger
Ilustrado por Chuck Galey
Traducido por Teresa Mlawer
HELPING A HERO

by Jo S. Kittinger
Illustrated by Chuck Galey
The Beauty of Dreams

by Jo S. Kittinger

Illustrated by Chuck Galey
Description of *The Kids* Series

- Client education
- Lawyer and other team member training
- Institutional development for pro bono, legal services and other non-profit organizations
- Policy advocacy.
Recognition

A Breath of Hope
Children’s Picture Books
Health & Safety
Gold

Helping A Hero
Children’s Picture Books
Health & Safety
Gold
Who Funds Videos?

Add video productions to all your grants!

Broadband Technology Opportunities Program
US Dept. of Commerce
Hire a lawyer who was a videographer before law school!

Daniel Ediger
daniele@nwjustice.org
why VIDEO?
Easy Access

YouTube
WashingtonLawHelp
Mobile phones
what kind of VIDEO?
animation & voice-over narration
animation & voice-over narration

video screen-grabs & online demos
animation & voice-over narration

video screen-grabs & online demos

examples of legal forms & documents
animation & voice-over narration

video screen-grabs & online demos

examples of legal forms & documents

live actors & narrators
Choose Your Own Adventure

Choose a character for a video about the rights & responsibilities of landlords & tenants in Washington

- My place needs repairs!
- I got an eviction notice!
- Where’s my security deposit?
- Can I break my rental agreement?
## Tools We Use to Make Videos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>still images</th>
<th>MS Office PowerPoint</th>
<th>Apple Keynote</th>
<th>Apple iPhoto</th>
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<tr>
<td>screen capture</td>
<td>Camstudio FREE</td>
<td>Snagit $50</td>
<td>Camtasia $300</td>
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<td>audio-video</td>
<td>flipcam</td>
<td>iPhone</td>
<td>mini-DV camcorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>animation</td>
<td>paper, pens</td>
<td>dry-erase whiteboard</td>
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Juvenile Record Sealing
FINAL Script V17 English

Narrator (English)  Daniel Ediger

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOICE-OVER</th>
<th>ON-SCREEN TEXT / VISUALS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00 A lot of people think your juvenile records automatically disappear when you turn 18. Not in Washington!</td>
<td>Animation: hand wiping out birthday cake with 18 candles;</td>
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<tr>
<td>That means you may get turned down for a job, school, apartment, or loan because of something you did a long time ago.</td>
<td>Hand unable to wipe out juvenile record;</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:12 But if you formally ask a court to seal your records, you may get a fresh start. So, how do you do it?</td>
<td>Hand draws “sealed” on the juvenile record, then wipes it out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:19 Welcome to our webcast about the basics of Juvenile Record Sealing in Washington State.</td>
<td>Juvenile Record Sealing in Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:23 Produced by the Northwest Justice Project...</td>
<td>Northwest Justice Project logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...and TeamChild.</td>
<td>TeamChild logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:28 Almost any involvement with the juvenile court system or the police before your 18th birthday, can leave behind a record. Do you have a juvenile record?</td>
<td>Person looking up, “?” above head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You may have a juvenile record that will show up later in your life even if you weren’t convicted of any crime.</td>
<td>You may have a juvenile record even if you were not convicted of a crime</td>
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<td>00:40 Here’s a list of some of the things that leave a juvenile record that you may want to seal:</td>
<td>Person looking up at list:</td>
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<tr>
<td>00:44 Your juvenile records aren’t just kept in one place.</td>
<td>Where is your juvenile record?</td>
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<td>Several different people and agencies keep copies of your juvenile records, including:</td>
<td>Hand draws symbols of:</td>
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<td>00:50 the Washington State Patrol...</td>
<td>W.S.P</td>
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<td>any local police department that arrested you...</td>
<td>Local Police</td>
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<td>the Administrative Office of the Court...</td>
<td>Courts</td>
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<td>any prosecutors in your case...</td>
<td>Prosecutor</td>
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<td>probation officers if you had one...</td>
<td>Probation officer</td>
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<td>01:04 Not only that, unlike in some states, these records are then sold to private companies</td>
<td>Multiple computers w/ arrows flowing from public to private</td>
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<td>01:08 ...then these companies re-sell the records to others who use them to do background checks on the internet.</td>
<td>Arrows flowing to symbols of:</td>
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<td>Even if you already served your time and paid your debt, a landlord, employer, or college program might turn you down when you apply</td>
<td>Job, School, Housing</td>
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<td>Application stamped “denied”</td>
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<td>Script / Edit / Translate</td>
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<td>Screenplay / Visualize</td>
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<td>Shoot / Animate / Edit</td>
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<td>Show / Distribute / Promote</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Survey / Critique</td>
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what interests them
Equal Access to Legal Services & Resources

Welcome to CLEAR*Online

A new easy way to apply for free legal help
Discussion

What questions, observations do you have?

What suggestions do you have for how you or others might use the Kids in Building 160 books?

What ideas do you have for future video topics?

What innovations are you using?
Announcing an Important New Book from the ABA
The Beauty of Dreams

The Beauty of Dreams
By Jo S. Kittinger, illustrated by Chuck Galey

Award winning author Jo S. Kittinger and illustrator Chuck Galey once again draw us into the world of The Kids in Building 160 series in the compelling story of a popular high-performing high school student-athlete and musician who learns from his college counselor that he entered the country illegally as a toddler. He lacks the legal status and documentation necessary for him to obtain financial aid to pursue his dream of a college education, and he is possibly subject to deportation.

With an introduction by his younger friend, whom we know from earlier books in the series, A Breath of Hope and Helping a Hero, and a knowledgeable pro bono lawyer, the student finds legal and financial resources that may be available to help him pay for college and enable him to stay in the United States after graduation. This 32-page picture book is an invaluable immigration primer for readers of all ages.

Kittinger's remarkable story of self-empowerment through legal literacy and Galey's beautifully evocative illustrations exemplify the courage needed to embark on a promising beginning toward the beauty of a dream fulfilled.

2014, hardcover, 32 pages, 8-1/2 x 11, PC 1620625
$15.95 General Public
$12.95 ABA Members

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Announcing an Important New Book from the ABA
Helping a Hero

Helping a Hero
By Jo S. Kittinger, illustrated by Chuck Galey

In this beautifully illustrated 32-page picture book, a young girl's uncle returns home from military service overseas a changed man—depressed, moody, unable to sleep, and unable to hold a job. The girl and a friend visit a lawyer who acts as a medical-legal partner, providing legal help to underserved communities in a hospital setting, who in turn connects the girl's uncle with Thresholds, an organization specializing in helping returning veterans.

Award-winning author Jo Kittinger brings the same intimate, straight-forward prose to this picture book as in her previous ABA book, A Breath of Hope, with another story in her Kids in Building 160 series. And Chuck Galey's gorgeous paintings depict both the sense of despair so often felt by vets today, as well as the ray of hope provided by organizations such as Thresholds.

Medical-Legal Partnerships (MLP) put lawyers who provide free legal services into the healthcare setting to help patients and families solve problems that may be related to illness like access to housing and employment, public benefits for people with disabilities, and other areas of legal needs.

2013, hardcover, 32 pages, 8-1/2 x 11, PC 1620567
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$12.95 ABA Members

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A BREATHE OF HOPE
BY JO S. KITTINGER
ILLUSTRATED BY CHUCK GALEY

Author Jo S. Kittenger sounds a call for fairness and justice in this picture-book depiction of medical-legal partnerships in action. Brilliantly illustrated by Chuck Galey, the book depicts how medical-legal partnerships and legal aid can transform the lives of families in need. The text focuses on the plight of a small girl suffering with asthma because of a landlord's neglect of an apartment contaminated with mold. Torn between being evicted and the health of their daughter, the family is connected to a legal representative by the doctor who cares for the child.

The book's worthy message will likely strike a universal chord with families, hospital administrators, doctors, family lawyers and anyone who can promote or benefit from medical-legal partnerships. This is a tender story, touched with sadness for a family in need. Jo S. Kittenger has created a moving parable perfect for use in hospital or institutional settings to explain this important new concept.

3 Easy Ways to Order

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A Breath of Hope

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<td>= Your Total $</td>
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*Shipping and Handling Fees

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<th>U.S. Rates</th>
<th>IL Rates</th>
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<td>$1000 and over</td>
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Un aliento de esperanza
BY JO S. KITTINGER
ILLUSTRATED BY CHUCK GALEY
TRANSLATED BY TERESA MLAWER

Author Jo S. Kittinger sounds a call for fairness and justice in this Spanish-language picture-book depiction of medical-legal partnerships in action. Brilliantly illustrated by Chuck Galey and translated by Teresa Mlawer, the book depicts how medical-legal partnerships and legal aid can transform the lives of families in need.

The text focuses on the plight of a small girl suffering with asthma because of a landlord's neglect of an apartment contaminated with mold. Torn between being evicted and the health of their daughter, the family is connected to a legal representative by the doctor who cares for the child.

The book's worthy message will likely strike a universal chord with families, hospital administrators, doctors, family lawyers and anyone who can promote or benefit from medical-legal partnerships. This is a tender story, touched with sadness for a family in need. Jo S. Kittinger has created a moving parable perfect for use in hospital or institutional settings to explain this important new concept.

3 Easy Ways to Order

Order Form
Un aliento de esperanza

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Subtotal (Qty. x Price) $ 
+ Tax
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