

Mrs. Harjo and Tony: Mrs. Harjo is 65 year old female who identifies as Latina. She lives in Globe, Arizona, and subsists on Supplemental Security Income, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps), and her garden. Mrs. Harjo has been living alone since the death of her husband five years ago. She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants, and visits her hometown in Mexico for Semana Santa every other year.

A paternal grandson, Tony (age 13), recently moved in with Mrs. Harjo following his mother's death from acute alcohol poisoning. Tony's biological father is serving five years in county jail on a third conviction. Tony's biological parents were never married, and his mother did not obtain a legal divorce from her first husband. When Tony was born, the hospital registrar listed the first husband as the legal father on his birth certificate. Trying to do the right thing, Mrs. Harjo went to Tony's school to give notice of a change of address and to put her name on file as guardian and emergency contact. School officials pointed out that Tony was not legally related to Mrs. Harjo, and that therefore she had no authority to authorize medical care, or to enroll Tony in school.

The principal referred Mrs. Harjo to an attorney, where she appealed for help in getting Tony's paternity corrected. The attorney advised that the biological father adopt Tony in order to change the legal parent, but refused to take the case because Tony's father was incarcerated, and the likelihood of an adoption by an incarcerated parent was too low. Moreover, the whereabouts of the legal father are unknown, and thus no relinquishment can be secured. (Garcia, Bain, Avera, Armenta, 2005)

Tony's grades have dipped to a C average (he typically earns A's and B's) since the death of his mother. He is on the freshman baseball team, and cites this as one of his favorite activities, but will be barred from playing should his grades continue to decline. Tony has no specific academic interests but wants to remain eligible to play baseball. Teachers report that Tony has always been quiet, but has had difficulty concentrating in school since his mother's death two months ago.