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## Seen on Sunday - November 24th, 2007

Seen this Sunday morning



Eyewitness News

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### **NATL ADOPTION MONTH**

This holiday weekend, full of family get-togethers, we're also celebrating national adoption month.

With us this morning is Rose Zeltser, the senior vice president of Children's aid and Family Services in New Jersey.

She's joined by adoptive parent Maria Perdomo and her daughter, Carmen. The Perdomos have five children, three of them adopted and have had seven foster children over the last 10 years. This year, the Perdomos received the prestigious "Angels in Adoption" award by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. They were nominated for the award from Congressman Steve Rothman.

### **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN FOSTERING ?**

You can:

- Adopt from the foster care system, by:

- Adopting an older child or a child with special needs, or by
- Becoming a "Fost-Adopt" parent for a child who is not yet legally free for adoption, with the possibility of adoption when he or she becomes legally available
- If you are a regular foster parent, you may possibly adopt your foster child if he or she becomes legally available

- Adopt an infant or older child from the United States, or

- Adopt a child from another country.

## **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW IF YOU ARE INTERESTED ADOPTION?**

There are several ways in which you can pursue adoption. You can:

- Use a public agency (DYFS)
- Use a private agency (like CASF)
- Use an attorney. The latter is called an "independent" or "private" adoption
- The basic requirements for prospective adoptive parents are that they be 18 years of age or older and at least ten years older than the child to be adopted.
- They should have the capacity to meet a child's physical and emotional needs.
- Applicants are asked to disclose any history of child abuse or neglect and any criminal record excluding minor traffic violations. Criminal history and child abuse records will be requested from the appropriate state and federal authorities.
- New Jersey requires a minimum of three face-to-face meetings with an agency social worker on separate days to conduct joint and individual interviews. Some of these may be group meetings. At least one interview is held in the candidates' home. All members of the household must be interviewed.
- The documentation required includes job and personal references, proof of income, medical reports, fingerprint and child abuse checks, verification of birth, marriage and divorce, if applicable.
- The agency will conduct a home visit to make sure that the home is a safe place to raise a child or children. It is not necessary to own one's home, just to provide a safe environment and adequate space. All homes must have a smoke detector on every level and a fire extinguisher in the kitchen. In addition, for parents who will continue to work outside the home, necessary childcare arrangements will be discussed.
- Some families will be eligible for stipends from the government. The amount depends on the age of child, the special needs of the child and what the state agency agrees to pay
- Older children are covered by Medicaid until they reach 18 - they can also be covered under their adoptive parents' insurance. .
- The Federal Tax Credit in was 2006 is \$10,960

## **WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE SOMEONE THINKING OF FOSTERING OR ADOPTING CHILDREN?**

Parents must have patience, understanding. They can't give up on these children and work to give them a sense of security. It is very rewarding to have adopted children.

## **CARMEN, YOU'VE SAID YOU ADOPTION GAVE YOU A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE.**

Carmen is 16-year-old and a junior at Teaneck High School. She is the captain of the Cheerleading team at Teaneck High. Her adoption was made official in February 2007. She has lived with the Perdomos for 6 1/2 years

For more information, you can go to [www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org) or [www.njarch.org](http://www.njarch.org). Also, you can call Adoption Resource Center at (201) 261-2800.