



Nuestra Familia

Tijuana, Mexico

**HOME
IMPROVEMENT
ROADMAP**

January | 2023



Overview of this Children's Home

Background, Mission, and Vision

The beginnings of Nuestra Familia, officially known as Casa Hogar Maria Inmaculada A.C., date back to 1985 when it was established by Father José de Jesús Quezada Martínez. He opened the home as a shelter and protection for single mothers with children who had no place to live. Throughout the years, the home passed from Father Jose to Mother Virginia Alejandra Oropeza Baez until 2011 when Mother Virginia met with Noel Diaz, president and founder of El Sembrador Ministries, to take over management and legal representation of the home. Shortly thereafter, Juan and Emma Villagran were invited by Noel Diaz to oversee day-to-day management in 2013. Although Emma passed away in June 2022, Juan has continued to oversee Nuestra Familia under the direction of El Sembrador with the help of his daughter-in-law, Elizabeth Villagran.

Nuestra Familia's mission is to raise happy children through a Christ-centered foundation, providing them with everything they need to prepare for a life of meaning and service. The leadership believes that all children deserve and should have the opportunity to succeed. They work hard to provide a safe environment and give these children respect, affection, and great love. Nuestra Familia provides each child with a unique personal development plan that identifies areas of strength and opportunity in the academic, extracurricular, personal, and spiritual spheres. Nuestra Familia hopes to eventually house about 100 children, including housing for those who have moved on to adulthood but would like a place to stay temporarily while they are in school or looking for their own place.

As a charitable aid organization, their vision is guided by the hope that one day, every child that comes to Nuestra Familia will be able to live independently and contribute to society in a meaningful way. "Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." -Matthew 25:40



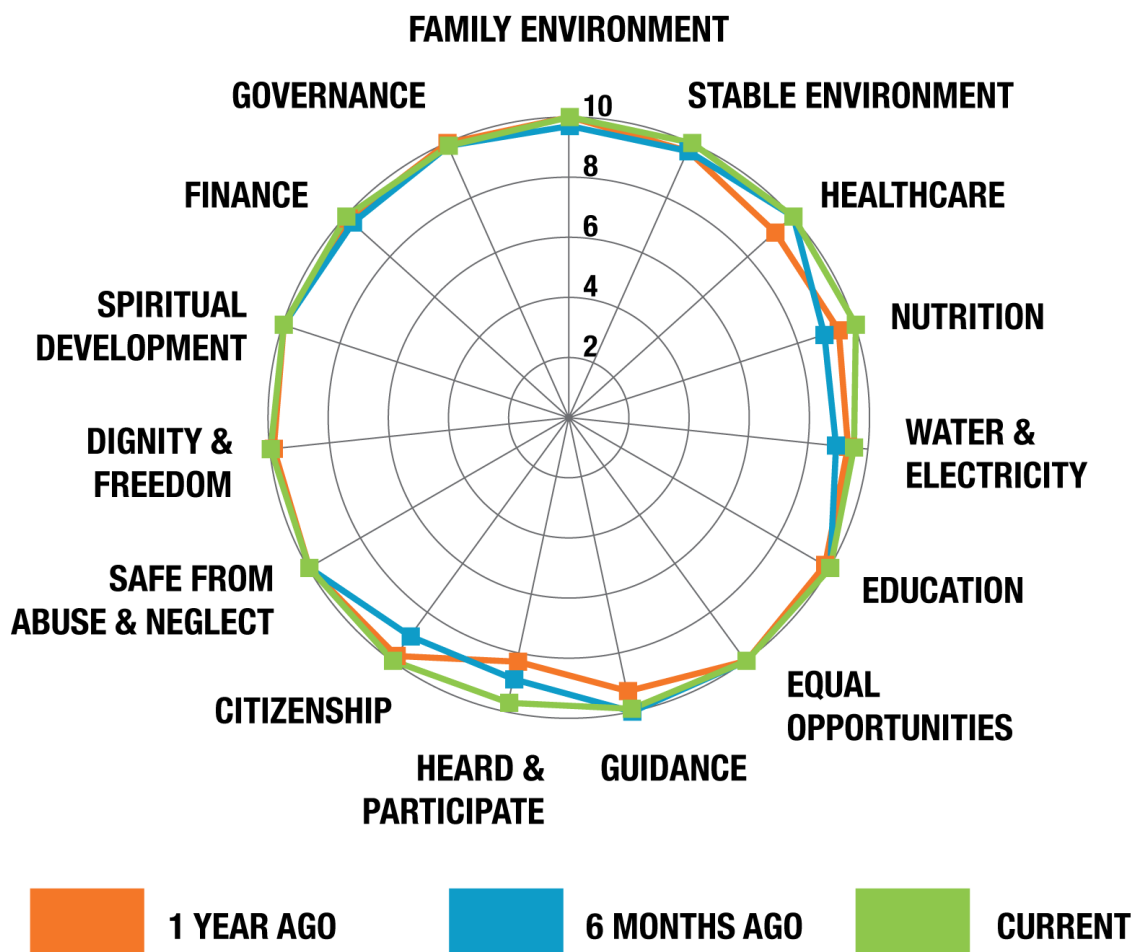
The Thrive Assessment

What is the Thrive Assessment?

In 1959, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defines children's rights to protection, education, healthcare, shelter, nutrition and more. We have codified all 13 Rights, as well as a Finance Standard and a Governance and Human Resource Standard, resulting in a total of 15 standards. These standards ensure that children receive care that truly helps them to thrive, now and in the future.

The Thrive Assessment will be administered every 6 months with each partner home to chart the progress of each standard. Our team works with caregivers to outline next steps which are then compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

Current Thrive Scale



Strategic Initiatives

SINGLE BEDS IN CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Due to the heavy use of most of the furniture in the home and the fact that the current furniture is more than 8 years old, it is necessary to replace 8 beds in the children's bedroom. The current beds are in poor condition due to wear and tear can no longer be adjusted or repaired.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	<\$5,000

AUTOMATIC DRINKING WATER PUMPS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	At least two automatic water pumps are needed to assist in the consistent distribution of water to all the buildings of the home including the areas closest to the cistern such as the youth house and the volunteer area.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	<\$5,000

LIGHT GENERATOR

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Although the home is connected to a solar panel system, they do not have a battery backup in case of power loss, which immediately affects the performance of equipment such as refrigerators, air conditioners, and water pumps. Not having an alternative source of energy such as a generator has resulted in material losses such as food and water due to the lack of electricity in the water pump that provides them with oxygen.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	<\$5,000



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category, Nuestra Familia is at a **THRIVING** level. The home promotes visits from children's relatives and provides them with facilities to do so. Currently, only two children receive visits, whereas the rest of the children do not have a family member who has officially requested visits with DIF.

The children have primary caregivers, there are two sets of foster parents, and the rest are permanent caregivers. Currently, only four out of the five family groups are functioning due to the fact that the home does not have preschool age children at this time. The vision with this setup is to have a permanent staff with the same person in the same area all week, so that children can experience stability. Mariel and Uriel have been working with Nuestra Familia for a little over two years and the home hopes to have more committed foster parents like them in the future.

Caregivers receive quarterly training on topics such as trauma or crisis. They also meet weekly with the psychologist, Orlanda, to review other topics of interest or address needs. Before the death of Mrs. Emma, they also had training on grief and loss management. These weekly training modules have a duration of two hours and in addition, caregivers also receive training promoted by DIF. The home has documentation of integration plans for new caregivers. Siblings within the home are encouraged to spend time together on weekends, during playtime, and on special occasions. The caregivers are evaluated every three months by a certified specialist on the standard of care they are providing to the children. Staff have also received continuous training on family traits and values as well as the creation of a family in an orphanage environment.

- ☐ Maintain the support provided by the psychologists in the home in terms of training and support for caregivers.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, this home is at the level of **THRIVING** in this category. The rules of the house are appropriate and consistent according to the ages of the children and youth. Marina, a member of the staff who is trained as a psychologist, is in charge of explaining rules to the children. Rules are also communicated in the presence of the assigned caregiver so that the caregiver can support the children in case of any doubt. Marina also serves as a supervisor with other caregivers to help determine behavioral intervention, when necessary. Consequences for breaking the rules are based on positive reinforcement, and consequences are according to the age and infraction. For example, privileges may be limited such as less television or not being able to attend regular walks or participate in some special occasions. Time out has

been implemented with younger children and the reparation of damages is taught if older children or adolescents are involved in the destruction of property.

At home, children are not called by inappropriate nicknames, only by their given name or a shorthand of their name. Siblings eat, play and work together. Psychologist Orlenda meets weekly with caregivers to address emotional or behavioral situations of concern with the children as well as to present topics to them, including scheduling ongoing meetings, if necessary, to support the families. Caregivers have 1-2 days off each week with an experienced caregiver who knows the children to cover these breaks. The turnover among caregivers is less than 20%. At the moment, there are 2 vacancies for weekend coverage. Additionally, if the home receives preschool age children again, it will be necessary to find an additional couple for that age group. The caregivers participate in joint activities and play with the children every day, including helping them adapt games to the weather conditions. The family groups have traditions such as celebrating birthdays, making their own cake, and decorating their space for birthdays. Everyone celebrates different occasions according to their preferences in each of the family groups, with favorite celebrations generally being graduations and Christmas.

- ☐ Hire two weekend staff support personnel
- ☐ Continue to make the necessary arrangements with DIF in order to receive preschool age children



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Nuestra Familia is at a **THRIVING** level in this category. Children are taken to the Children's Hospital of the Californias or another doctor for medical exams. All children have their immunizations and vaccination records, and they have hygiene supplies in different areas for hand washing and bathing. The caregivers also teach the children to wash and sanitize their hands for meals, with materials to do so in places that are visible to everyone. A pediatrician and a hospital are identified in case of an emergency. Adolescent girls have access to hygiene products and sufficient supplies. They are also taught what to expect with their cycles and how to dispose of the products, with the psychologist providing additional support.

Children receive annual vision, hearing, and dental exams, and those who require orthodontic treatment are treated on an ongoing basis. Hair is checked weekly for lice, and there are currently no cases requiring treatment. Each child has a medical file with all the necessary information, and the nurse updates the file constantly. Nuestra Familia has a stocked first aid kit in the infirmary and another in the entrance area. Children can see a doctor, in case of emergencies, and the children brush their teeth three times a day, as long as they are at home. The home currently has an emergency medical fund with ACHF. There has also been training for children with special conditions such as mental health medication. The nurse follows up on cases that require mental health medication, and the foster parents provide their observations to best follow the routine according to the specialist's indications.

- ☐ Maintain the good practices and strategies already implemented.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Nuestra Familia is at a **THRIVING** level. All children receive an adequate amount of calories in their diet and the food is prepared in a hygienic manner. The kitchen, dining room, and storage area are free of toxic substances, as well as free of pests. They have a monthly fumigation service and the maintenance manager maintains a routine of fumigating important areas such as the pantries on a weekly basis, with special attention to the refrigerated and food storage areas to prevent the spread of bugs in food such as beans, rice, etc. Consequently, the facilities have not had any pests.

The kitchen and cooking areas are well-ventilated. Children receive tasty, appetizing, and balanced meals every day with daily protein and 2-3 fruits and vegetables. Additionally, the nurse takes the children every month on a day they do not have classes to be checked by a nutritionist, provided by the Hospital Infantil de las Californias. These visits are more frequent when it is detected that a child has white spots on the face. After the evaluation, results are passed to Juan to communicate with kitchen staff, and posters are pasted with the food to motivate the children to eat in a healthier way. The cooks also attend training at least twice a year.

The most important challenge they have worked on in this area is to make healthy food attractive to the children since each one has their own ideas and preferences. Thus, staff find creative ways to help them eat vegetables. Some children have to be motivated to eat more protein and they look for ways to make the dishes more appetizing.

☐ Maintain and continue implementing strategies and best practices.



Right to Clean Water and Electricity

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home is at the level of **THRIVING** in this category. The facilities have been inspected in the last year by qualified personnel to evaluate safety. This has been done by firefighters and civil protection personnel who have reviewed and assessed how the home is in terms of safety, in addition to ensuring all staff have been trained in prevention measures and protocols in case of emergencies. Regarding water quality, Nuestra Familia has a reliable supplier that is responsible for ensuring safe drinking water quality. These actions include routine maintenance, cleaning, disinfection, and changing the container when needed. Each bathroom and room has a working light bulb. There is a safe drainage system that does not contaminate the drinking water, and they are constantly striving to improve the system to ensure it is safe, as it is a requirement for the operating license. There is an emergency plan in place in case of fire, flood, water loss, etc. The house has a maintenance person who takes care of most of the needs or emergencies on-site. With major construction issues, the house has a reliable supplier to whom they turn when necessary. The property is able to withstand the elements such as

wind, rain, etc. The children have easy access to water and can drink it whenever they want. Faucets in the sinks and showers are all functioning.

One of the current challenges they are experiencing is ensuring that all buildings receive water from the cistern. This requires at least two pumps for proper water distribution. The outdoor facilities are well-lit to ensure the safety of the children. Nuestra Familia has a preventive maintenance plan and corrective maintenance is addressed according to priority. However, the maintenance plan has not been updated recently with ongoing issues or follow-up. The electrical infrastructure is in good condition and there are no exposed wires. In the summer there are always some power outages. Although the home has solar panels, there is no power source outside this in case of power outages. They are trying to find a generator that can provide extra electricity in this type of case.

- ☐ Ensure two pumps are always functioning to help distribute water from the cistern to all buildings
- ☐ Obtain a power generator for electricity in case of blackout emergencies
- ☐ Update the maintenance plan and maintenance logbooks



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Nuestra Familia is at a **THRIVING** level. All children are enrolled in school and have internet and computers available for use. Although the children do not currently receive personalized tutoring, there are times when they are given the necessary support by a caregiver or teacher, if necessary. The school supports them with counseling and tutoring when needed. At the moment, there are no special cases that require specific attention. Children 7 years and older can articulate each letter of the alphabet. Generally, the school supports the children's literacy needs and if specialized attention is required, help from a specialist at the Children's Hospital of the Californias is sought. Children 11 years and older are able to read at a third-grade level or higher, and all children 9 years and older can perform simple mathematical operations. The children read one hour daily and participate in reading comprehension activities. On-site volunteers Karl and Marsha support the reading process, in addition to running the reading program with Brad, who oversees the Books, Library, Reading (BLR) Program. There is a library of over 75 books in Spanish and all children read according to their interests.

Nuestra Familia has funds and lodging available so that young adults can continue their development after their time at the home. Leadership continues to provide support as long as young adults seek it, and donors are sought to fulfill these needs.

Children have toys available in their living quarters and the material for art is in the homework area. The children have had classes on how to use the computer at home as well as computer classes at school. The progress of each child is reviewed by the person who is supporting them in the homework area, and they are analyzed and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Children also have the opportunity to have art materials and stationery is also available for homework.

- ☐ Continue to maintain support for education funding.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Nuestra Familia is currently at a **THRIVING** level. The children each have their own personal space, such as drawers, to store their belongings and special gifts. The children receive the same opportunities for education and have everything they need to pursue it. There is also scheduled time for the children to participate in extracurricular activities. Karl and Marsha are supporting the children with basketball and volleyball. In addition to sports activities, they receive piano lessons, dance classes, and Zumba on the weekends. They have even had acting classes in the past where they've held plays related to specific festivities. Children with disabilities have access routes and ramps to the playground, and those needing glasses have been addressed. The nurse is very attentive to the follow-up in these areas and communicates any necessary information to caregivers and/or the appropriate personnel. There is also a program for the transition to adulthood through the Child Hope and Life Plan Program with Karl and Marsha.

- ☐ Maintain and continue implementing strategies and best practices.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home is at a **THRIVING** level in this category. Nuestra Familia has a profile or job description for when they are looking to hire new caregivers. Children are taught to be respectful and get along with each other. All children and youth are given the opportunity to see a therapist on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The staff also hold weekly meetings with the therapists to discuss and assess behaviors observed during the week. From there, attention is provided for them to receive psychological help. Additionally, caregivers are evaluated by Orlenda to determine if they are quality mentors for the children.

Psychologists support the process of explaining puberty changes to the children. The home and children have access to a specialist to address common and difficult issues. Caregivers receive training on how to model positive behaviors in children as well as receive follow-up with Orlenda in group work. Caregivers are also trained by DIF according to the themes and topics provided by the institution. Adolescents 13 years and older have received training regarding sexuality from Orlenda and Carlos as their psychologists. Adolescents also receive aptitude tests to determine their long-term academic goals as part of their life plan, which are reinforced at school. Preparations are currently underway to better understand what the teenagers want to study right as they are exploring their options. There is a documented program which the children can participate in to help plan for their life and future. There is also a system of constant communication and support for students in technical or university careers.

- ☐ Maintain support with the necessary funds for psychologists to continue working with children and staff.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Nuestra Familia is at a **THRIVING** level in this category. The children decide what they want to do in their free time. Children can also choose their clothing on a daily basis and in some cases are given suggestions on their attire or grooming. Each week, children are invited to participate in menu planning for meals. The menu is available for all children to see in the kitchen and in the office with Juan. Children and caregivers receive information about healthcare procedures and are given the opportunity to ask questions prior to their administration or visit to the doctor. The director has implemented Child Hope Plans with volunteers and they are updated on a monthly basis. The home provides the children with leadership roles and activities where they can practice their leadership skills. While there are groups of children who act as leaders and represent all the others, they do not have defined children's committees.

☐ Continue working with Child Hope Plans to strengthen children's participation



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category, Nuestra Familia is at the level of **THRIVING**. Each child has a birth certificate and it is included in a personal file. The children are taught to repair damages or wrongs committed, depending on the seriousness of each infraction. Daily chores are assigned to the children according to their age, and each one has a schedule with specific duties to perform. In this home, they celebrate special occasions and holidays with parties. While the children's favorite celebration is Christmas, there's also an emotional element before these holidays, and some get a little sad. However, with the reception of visitors, they get excited to meet new people and receive gifts. The home is very clean, tidy, and free of objects that obstruct passageways, with everything stored in the corresponding space. The children participate in talks about democracy and are also taught here at the home to participate in making decisions for the well-being and agreement of all.

As director, Juan is one of the main mentors for the children. Marsha and Karl also provide support by organizing and accompanying the children as they participate in community activities such as: cooking buñuelo, gathering pantry items and food to share, and visiting the elderly in nursing homes. Major events are shared with the children and they also have the opportunity to attend school field trips and special organized events. Some of the children participate in the basketball and soccer teams at school and receive support to attend competitions in the state of Michoacán. The children also are accompanied by someone from the home when going off-site as part of the DIF requirement. Karl and Marsha, as part of their Child Hope Plans, will often accompany a school trip to cheer for the boys and girls in their sports competition.

☐ Maintain and continue implementing strategies and best practices.



Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home is at the level of **THRIVING** currently. The level of security is adequate in accordance with the surrounding community. Children are separated by gender and age, and all staff members have received training in positive discipline and alternatives to corporal punishment. There is a rule that male staff members are not to be alone with a child under any circumstances. In addition, visitors are also told when they arrive on-site what they can and cannot do. There are rules and regulations to ensure that the children are not abused physically, verbally, or emotionally. The home ensures that the children are not hired for any work activity that harms or threatens their physical or emotional health, with extra attention given to any working situation. Caregivers receive training every 6 months on how to avoid and prevent abuse and the children over 5 years of age have attended training on reporting abuse as well. Orlanda has also held sessions with the children in the form of games to address these issues. The home has a system for checking employee references to meet local standards, and employees have a criminal background check as part of their job requirements. Each child is evaluated upon entry to identify individual psychological needs and treatment of traumatic situations, and in cases of specialized care needs, Orlanda refers them to the mental health hospital.

- ☐ Continue to support with funds to maintain the work of the psychologists in the home.



Right to Dignity & Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, the home is at a **THRIVING** level in this category. The children are bathed daily. They are always encouraged to be kind to each other and are corrected for misbehavior or bullying. Each child has their own individual bed. However, some beds need replacing due to wear and tear. They also have sufficient clothing and underwear, sometimes a little too much clothing. The children have sufficient sheets, towels, and blankets that are washed continuously. The home also has safety protocols in place and a training registry for the children, caregivers, and other collaborators like psychologists. The children have their own toothbrushes and sufficient personal hygiene items. Art materials and toys are available for all children, according to their age. Additionally, children have the opportunity to perform chores in the kitchen, on the playground, and in cleaning the vans to earn a little money that they can keep to spend or save.

- ☐ Replace 8 individual children's beds.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Nuestra Familia is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. Children have the opportunity to be part of a spiritual community within a Catholic congregation. If children from other religious backgrounds arrive at the home, they are oriented regarding the blessing of food, but are not pressured to perform any religious activity. However, they are given explanations about how they can participate and are respected regarding their spiritual inclinations. Children are free to participate in daily community prayer or other spiritual rituals. Among the materials available and easily accessible to the children, Nuestra Familia has a rosary and chapel. Every week the home has a talk on spiritual growth and they attend mass together on Sundays or for celebrations. Additionally, they have catechism classes and children can participate by serving in mass every month. The home has a designated place for meditation and prayer. There is also a joint project with several organizations that support the home as well as individual donors, to honor the memory of Mrs. Emma with the construction of a memorial space in her name. The goal is to provide additional space for the children to keep Mrs. Emma in their memory and remember the love she had for the children, as well as to help them deal with their grief.

- ☐ Complete the construction and installation of the memorial for Mrs. Emma.



Finance Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category the house is in the **THRIVING** level. On a monthly basis, they keep financial records of their income and expenses, which are available for review. Tax returns have been filed in accordance with government requirements. Receipts are kept and a monthly profit and loss statement is generated. There is also an annual budget for general expenses, and bank accounts are reconciled on a monthly basis. The home has an appropriate division of duties for internal control and conducts internal and external audits of monthly finances. They have a plan for expenses over \$25,000 and have their books and records validated by a certified accountant. This home is highly committed to the transparent use of the resources it receives and is diligent in reporting.

- ☐ Maintain and continue implementing strategies and best practices.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Nuestra Familia is currently at the **THRIVING** level. The staff members have been trained on the importance of drinking water quality, its relationship to health, and the need for safe drinking water in sufficient quantities for domestic use, such as drinking, cooking, and hygiene. New caregivers shadow an experienced caregiver for at least one week to mentor them in their adaptation and integration process. They have an organizational chart that defines team positions and activities, and regular meetings are held to discuss issues of concern and process improvements. As for their documentation and operating license, they are only awaiting approval of the internal civil protection plan before they can obtain their operating license. The staff has attended annual training sessions on attachment and child development, topics which are addressed by psychologist Orlenda. The board of directors meets more than twice a year. There is a vacation policy for all staff and each team member has a complete and updated file. The home also holds team meetings and supervisor-scheduled 1-on-1 meetings on a regular basis.

- ☐ Complete the administrative processes and preparation of documents to obtain the license to operate.



A CHILD'S
HOPE
FOUNDATION