



Niños de Baja

Mexico

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

January | 2023



Overview of this Children's Home

Niños de Baja began in 2005. The original orphanage was Rancho de Los Niños, which began operations in 1968. Niños de Baja began with a single home that functioned as a daycare center for the community. An additional home was built, and they began to receive children from DIF. In the following years, more property was acquired, and additional homes were built. Short-term missionary teams began to provide the labor and resources needed for expansion. These missionary teams continue to be the backbone of the home's operations. Today it has five separate houses, with a total capacity of 56 children. In addition, there is a dedicated dining room and kitchen to provide and share meals, a guest house for visiting volunteer teams, a director's office, and several storage and operations buildings.

Niños de Baja has a Christ-centered mission. The home is not a "complex" like most orphanages. Instead, it consists of five houses spread throughout a neighborhood. Each house emphasizes a family atmosphere, with a set of house parents living in each home. Although the house parents and staff are paid employees, each considers working here their mission. Their love and dedication are evident in the attitude of the children. Each child comes to home through tragic circumstances that are not of their own making. Within days of arriving at Niños de Baja, the sad, hurting, and fearful child is gone. Thanks to the love and care of our house parents and caregivers, a happy, healthy, and confident child begins to emerge. Although caregivers and staff never know if they will have the child for 15 days or 15 years, love, care, and guidance are poured into each child every day.

Their future goals include continuing to provide the best care for the children entrusted to them. They plan to reach capacity soon with 56 children, and maintain that number. Their goals remain dedicated to breaking the generational chains of abuse, addiction, and hopelessness by providing loving alternatives. They plan to acquire more property that will allow them to build an activity center that includes a gymnasium, a music and art center, and a soccer field. They also plan to build housing for their graduates who stay at the home to continue their college or other education. In addition, they plan to build housing to revive their internship program to help train others to serve around the world.

Niños de Baja wants to offer their children opportunities to try new things, visit new places, and have access to options for their lives. They want to increase the provisions for their children by way of good food, additional medical, dental, and vision care, and counseling services. In addition, the home will encourage children to continue to give back to their family, church, and those in need in their community. They will encourage children to continue their education and training after high school. To this end, they seek to maintain and expand their education funds. Ultimately, Niños de Baja wants their children to become responsible and active members of society. This includes them becoming strong husbands, fathers, wives, and mothers. One day they hope to see these children return to the home with their own children and proudly tell them, "This is where I grew up. This was my family and they loved me."



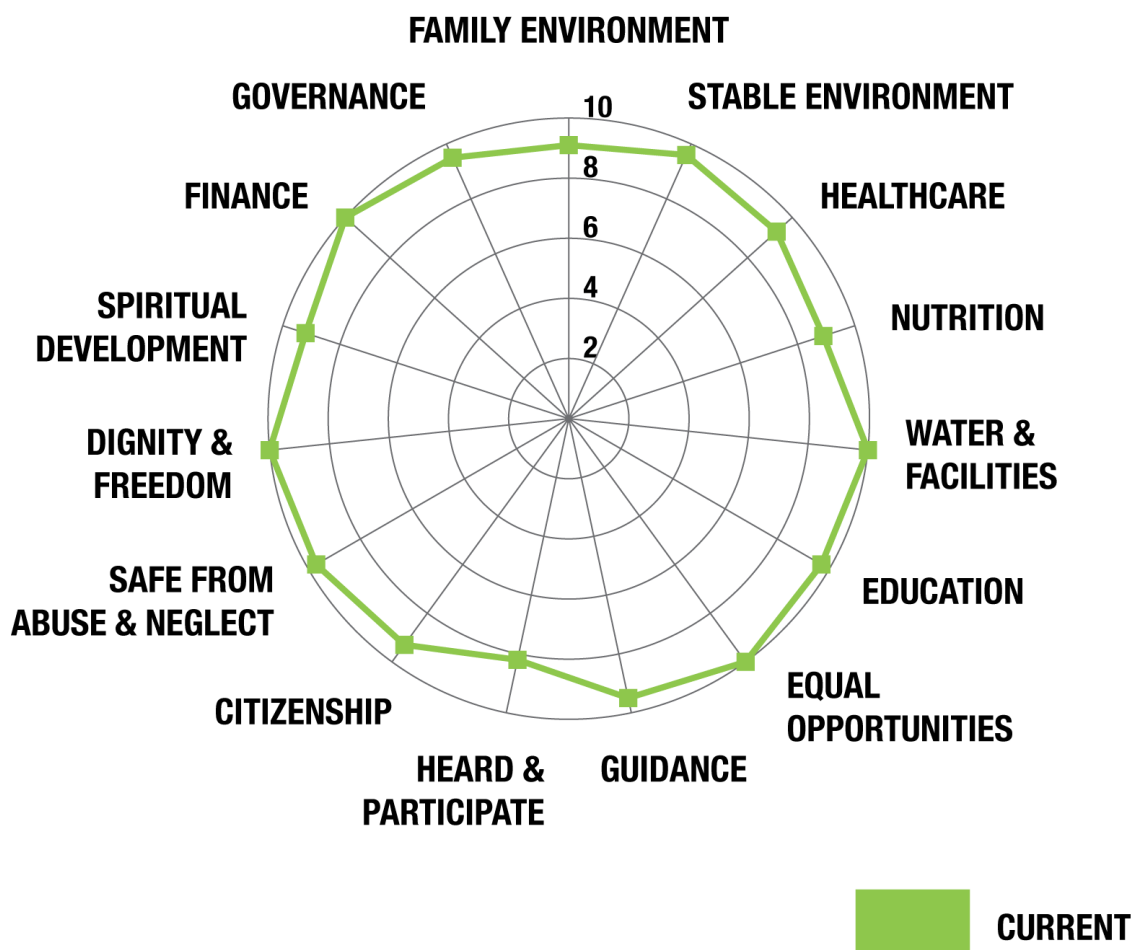
The Thrive Assessment

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

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	<p>At Niños de Baja, great importance has been placed on providing psychological care to children and adolescents who live at the home. They are firm believers that children need to work through their trauma and want to assist them in improving their living conditions through the support of a psychologist. However, access to psychological care has been affected because Niños de Baja has had to allocate a large part of their economic resources to comply with new reforms and Mexican labor laws. Consequently, they have had to invest more money in following up with compliance to support their employees, which has affected the annual budget in several aspects.</p> <p>The purpose of this request is to help the children and youth of Niños de Baja continue to receive the psychological support that the psychologist has been providing. The funds for this strategic initiative will be used to pay for and continue the psychologist's services weekly for a few months.</p>
ESTIMATED FUNDING	<\$5,000



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, in this category, Niños de Baja is **THRIVING**. Each home houses fewer than 12 children at a time, thus ensuring that each child will have individualized attention from the caregivers responsible for them. In addition, they have a sufficient number of staff - 29 staff members between house parent couples and caregivers. These groups in the homes live as a stable family unit. In this home, siblings are encouraged to eat together, go to church, hold devotionals, and carry out activities together (especially in the vacation months). All of these activities serve to strengthen family bonds. The children's home allows visits from biological relatives of the children as long as DIF has authorized them. These visits usually take place on the last Sunday of the month between 2-4 pm. The leadership of the home has, on occasion, reported to DIF when a child was uncomfortable with the visit, thereby protecting the child's integrity.

The caregivers (dads and uncles) have had training based on two books called Effective Orphan Care Ministry and Help for the Hurting Child by Dr. Larry E. Banta, who specializes in medicine and psychology for orphaned children and is also an active member of the Board of Directors for Niños de Baja in the USA. The directors are also open to further training for the staff. So far, they have received three types of training: proper discipline methods, sexuality (by DIF), and those that are mandatory by Civil Protection. For the incorporation, training, and evaluation of caregivers, leadership maintains a file and letters of recommendation are requested. DIF conducts one to three evaluations per year, through the questions they ask the children they also evaluate the caregivers and house parents. DIF interviews a sample of employees and children for these types of evaluations. Based on DIF's evaluations, feedback is given as to whether or not the staff are sufficiently trained to work with children, and recommendations are made as to what needs to be done to improve. Therefore, the directors of Niños de Baja follow the corresponding recommendations when applicable. Since there is not much employee turnover, they do not have an organizational chart, but everyone knows what to do. However, the directors feel that they do need a written document.

- ☐ Train staff on a quarterly basis on the topic of "trauma-informed care".
- ☐ Continuously train staff on family traits and values in a homestay environment.
- ☐ Consider creating a written organizational chart



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. The rules of the home are appropriate for the age range and level of understanding of the children who live there. Consequences for breaking the rules are generally based on positive discipline, e.g., no TV, no dessert, washing the dishes, etc., but the punishment should not be too prolonged. House parents and other caregivers have been trained to avoid big punishments such as punishing children for a whole week or a whole month. Parents have been told that they have a three-day limit for punishments. Whenever the directors realize that a child is being punished for a prolonged time, they talk to the house parents directly about reducing the time of punishment to avoid conflict in the relationship with the children. At Niños de Baja, children are called by their names, spoken to with respect, and asked to do the same with everyone else. There are cases of children using nicknames or a caregiver speaking to a child with affection, but demeaning nicknames are never used. They try to make sure that all the children have breakfast, lunch, and dinner all together. However, it depends on the available schedules since some children have activities, as is the case of some youngsters who if they miss meal time, they are fed at their individual homes. The psychologist comes weekly to Niños de Baja and meets at least once a month with the directors and each caregiver couple to discuss general and specific issues that occur in their homes such as follow-up therapy or discipline for the children. Caregiver couples work five days a week with two days off and the “aunt & uncle” caregivers cover their breaks. In addition, an “uncle/aunt” is also present in the dormitories in the evenings to supervise so that house parents can rest without interruption. Aunts and uncles work six days and rest one day, since their schedules are shorter than those of the house parents.

Turnover is less than 20% per year. Caregivers receive guidance on how to create a more loving and stable environment from the directors, in addition to recommendations from the psychologist. Caregivers are oriented on what to do in various situations, and couples, uncles, or aunts often provide guidance to support one another. The caregivers participate with the children in devotionals, movie Fridays, birthday parties, and soccer games, among other activities. Two to three times a year each house will go to the movies, the beach, the mountains, etc. The caregivers play and work with the children continuously. There was a time when there was a “bicycle frenzy” and the aunts & uncles would take the children to the park in groups. Thanks to the number of collaborators within the home, the opportunity for frequent recreational activities outside the home is possible.

- ☐ Implement meetings with caregivers and a specialist to discuss behavioral ideas about to help effectively teach and discipline the children in their care.
- ☐ Obtain guidance or training for caregivers on how to create a more stable, loving, and nurturing environment in their home.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home is currently at the **THRIVING** level in this category. While the children have not been given annual medical check-ups, when they get sick they are immediately seen by Dr. Angelica in Guadalupe (a neighboring town) or taken to the pediatrician in Ensenada. The home has a fund for medical emergencies. There is a constant follow-up in situations where children require it, such as the case of Ana, who has to have X-rays every so often. Seguro Popular, a government program focused on providing medical access to vulnerable populations, comes to the homes and gives vaccinations to the children when needed. They have a dentist to whom they take the children, whenever necessary, as well as the support of a chiropractor, when needed. Not all the children have a vaccination record or schedule, as some have not even been legally registered and do not have any documentation. However, more than 50% of the children do have vaccination records. Birth certificates are similar in that not all children have them, and they are in the process of obtaining some others. It is also worth mentioning that the health center supports them whenever necessary.

There is water and soap available in areas near the bathrooms and dining room in all the houses. Additionally, the caregivers always remind the children to wash their hands, especially since the pandemic. Although there is no nurse on the staff, the “house mom” in each home is in charge of explaining menstrual cycles and how to use feminine products, etc. Adolescent girls have sufficient supplies of feminine products and when the supply runs low, they buy more at Costco to replenish their stock. There are currently two babies whose diapers are changed as needed, plus an older child who also wears a diaper. There is a procedure in place that before the aunt leaves or there is a shift change, she ensures the baby is clean. The aunts are involved in potty training, and the example of younger children seeing older children naturally encourages them to leave the diaper behind. The children receive eye exams if it is detected that one of them requires special attention, but only in those cases.

At Niños de Baja, children are checked for head lice and are given treatment, if needed. Each child has a general file in which they try to keep all information related to the child. In case of a medical incident or otherwise, the information is reported and recorded in the file, and items such as prescriptions are given to the person in charge of dispensing the medication. The home has a general first aid kit, as well as one in each house. However, these kits are not fully stocked because there is no inventory of what is missing. Children brush their teeth at least once a day, but depending on the area, it may be twice a day. Caregivers are constantly asking for toothbrushes and remind the children to brush their teeth. They also have a child requiring specialized treatment at the Children's Hospital of the Californias which involves some mental challenges as well as physical challenges due to the fact that he has cartilage issues resulting

in one slightly smaller leg. It is worth mentioning that generally Niños de Baja does not receive cases of children with special needs, but this was an exception. The child was previously in a home for special needs cases, but he was more advanced than the rest of the children and so they moved him. Now at this home, the child has advanced further including eating by himself and dressing himself. Initially he was in a wheelchair, then in a walker, and now he even runs. Although he has improved considerably in these areas, he has not progressed the same academically, though he still attends school. He can do blueprints or calligraphy, but he does not follow dictation. Fortunately, he has received a lot of support from the director, Karla, as well.

- ☐ Find a resource to ensure children receive routine eye exams, regardless of whether they wear glasses or not.
- ☐ Find a resource to ensure children receive routine dental checkups every six months.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. Children receive a sufficient amount of calories per day that include robust appetizing meals with daily protein such as eggs, ham, fish, chicken, meat, lentils, etc. The children also eat 2 to 3 servings of fruits or vegetables daily. Vegetables specifically are served at all meals, with fruit sometimes offered in the morning and/or at dinner. The directors acknowledge that they could implement a more complete menu regarding the dinners provided to the children. Food is prepared hygienically. Additionally, the kitchen and storage areas are free of toxic substances, and all food spaces including the dining room are fumigated monthly.

The kitchen and cooking area is well ventilated. Currently, they do not have a nutritionist to help them verify that children are receiving the required nutrients daily. However, they have been using menus generated by a nutritionist some time ago, with occasional modifications. While cooks have previously been trained in safety, food preparation, and the storage of supplies in the warehouse, none of them have been trained recently.

- ☐ Obtain support from a nutritionist to verify that children are getting enough nutrients daily.
- ☐ Provide 2-3 servings of fruits and 2-3 servings of vegetables daily to children.
- ☐ Train cooks annually in food safety and preparation.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category, Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level. The facilities have been inspected by government authorities to verify that the property is safe. They have a drinking water supplier that provides storage tanks, along with a purifying filter placed in each house by the water company. Children have easy access to the water, which is available whenever they want to drink it. Children fill the water bottle and bring it inside the houses, and from there, they can drink it as desired. Each bathroom and living room has working light bulbs. The electrical infrastructure is in good condition, and they are safely connected to the power grid. Maintenance of light bulbs and exposed wires are checked regularly. They also have a generator exclusive for the refrigerators when the power goes out. However, they do not have generators for the rest of the houses. The property has good drainage that does not contaminate the drinking water. There is an emergency plan in case of fire, flooding, etc. For consistent water access, they have water storage and the pump is turned on daily to ensure water is available all day long. If they run out of water, they turn on water pipes to replenish their water supply.

Their facilities are in good condition. They have had no problems with water drainage when it rains and have not experienced any flooding. Staff members support the home with everything related to maintenance and prevention. Joaquin and Tarsis are two such individuals who live very close to the home and come immediately if a maintenance or repair issue arises. Safety issues have been addressed, and the property can withstand heavy rains and all other elements. The sink faucets and shower heads are also in good condition. The facilities in each house are well-lit to help ensure the safety of the children. The home has a civil protection plan in place which is renewed every year as per local regulations. Niños de Baja also has an internal advisor who supports them in their approach to development, including ensuring they receive civil protection training regularly. There is an annual plan to address the maintenance of the property through a list of needs that is carried out and constantly updated. The facilities comply with local requirements and codes. The house also has two architects who are in charge of designing and adding modifications to the home's design plan.

☐ Continue with their good practices as they have been established.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. All children are enrolled in school and consistently attend classes in El Porvenir or Ampliación. The children have access to the internet and computers, including tablets, in each house. They are all instructed on how to use these devices as well. Each child receives personalized counseling support through their caregivers, and two receive specialized literacy counseling. All children seven years and older are evaluated and able to identify and articulate the sound of each letter of the alphabet, except one child. However, a plan is already in place to help this child improve. Children 11 years and older are assessed and able to read and write at a third-grade level or above. All children nine years and older are evaluated and can perform basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. However, they have identified some children who are still learning, and are being supported to perform these basic operations.

Periodic activities are carried out with younger children who do not yet attend school, so that they reach developmental goals and are prepared for school. All aunts & uncles during the afternoon shift conduct activities with these younger children and report to the directors. The school uses graded assessments to identify children with learning disabilities. They have had cases detected by teachers and aunts/uncles quickly to identify learning problems such as language, concentration, or slow learning. While there are books in each home, they have not formally ensured that the youngest children are read to. However, they do have plans to do so in the future. In each house, they have a variety of age-appropriate books for the children that are available, easily accessible, and in their language. Because of the structure of the home, books are divided among the five houses. However, between all the books, there are more than 75 books available and they allow sharing between houses. At Niños de Baja, funds are available for young people who wish to continue their education beyond secondary school by virtue of financial support from the board of trustees along with a college ministry church. Currently, they have a young man going to college in Ensenada. Starting in high school, a scholarship is available to the teenagers by the NDB Board of Trustees to pay for registration, uniforms, travel expenses, etc. This money is received from the church twice a year and is only used for educational purposes. The children who live in Niños de Baja and are of school-age have toys and materials according to their developmental needs. They also have frequent access to art materials that are age-appropriate and children frequently make crafts. The home also has a person who reviews grades and progress with each child every three months, and report cards are kept on file. The process for reviewing report cards includes house parents receiving the report cards, taking them to the directors, and then analysis is performed and added to their file.

☐ Continue with their good practices as they have been established.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is currently at the **THRIVING** level in this category. All children have a designated space for their personal items and belongings. All clothing and footwear are for the exclusive use of each child and no sharing is required. Children have equal opportunity to attend school, receive tutoring, access books, and attend extracurricular activities such as music lessons, soccer practice and other games. Caregivers act as role models and are available to guide the children as well.

Particular adaptations have been made for children who require them, as is the case of those who have been fitted with glasses. As mentioned previously, they currently have a child with some disabilities who when he arrived, had some physical limitations. However, he can now walk and run without the support of a walker. This child has also been supported with an adapted bathroom to include a fixed bar to hold on to when showering. When he began attending elementary school, the school took on the task of installing ramps so that he would have easier access.

Currently, the home has a university plan and those who wish to study a trade will have their studies paid for by the home. One such example is a 19-year-old girl who entered university last week and is being supported financially. This university plan at Niños de Baja has written scholarship-commitment rules that the young people have to agree to and comply with. If they do not comply with these requirements, the support can be withdrawn. There have been other young people who, upon reaching the age of 18, have withdrawn from the home of their own accord.

☐ Continue with the good practices as they have been established.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. The home has a written job description and profile for new caregivers. To strengthen the recruitment of new staff, they have sought referrals from acquaintances and their church community. Directors Juan and Karla have hired four couples for the position of house parents. The house parents, as well as the psychologist, are required to be Christians due to the nature and objectives of the home, such as prayers, devotionals, etc. In the case of the aunts/uncles, there is no concern if they are of another religion.

Children are taught to be respectful by caregivers. They are allowed to see a psychologist weekly and she currently sees five children. Recently, the psychologist mentioned to the directors that two of the girls have already improved, and it is possible to focus efforts on other children. There have also been situations where children have been identified as needing support, and

the psychologist has immediately attended to them, even though the treatment is generally limited to only five children at a time. DIF evaluates caregivers to establish if they are quality caregivers and makes recommendations for improvement in some of the areas, which the directors support and follow through with to help caregivers improve in that sense.

In the event that DIF issues an opinion that a caregiver is not suitable, a decision is made not to employ them. The directors, parents, and caregivers talk to adolescents over 13 about educational issues related to responsible sexual behavior as they go through physical changes such as puberty. Additionally, the older girls also talk to the younger girls about these changes. Director Karla's mother is a social worker who also supports the girls when they ask her questions. Currently, the psychologist has not addressed these topics as she only offers general therapy according to what she was hired for. Caregivers have received talks on proper discipline methods and sexuality from DIF. Adolescents over 15 years old do not receive aptitude tests or professional counseling to determine their academic abilities and long-term educational goals. However, if they have any concerns or inclinations, they are supported in their needs. Such is the case of the young man who wanted to be a carpenter, one who wanted to be a Youtuber, and another who wanted to fix computers. In Niños de Baja, there is a documented plan in which students after the age of 15 can receive a scholarship to pay for their uniforms, books, etc. Although there is a life skills program, it is not documented or something they can participate in regularly. One such example of life skills available is cooking classes where they learn to make flour tortillas, bread, and cookies, among many other things. During school vacations, children work with Joaquin to clean, build, and paint. In the past, kids have made a bar, helped install fans, and many other projects. They have documented everything they have done with photographs, which they report to their board of trustees. There is constant communication with young adults who are currently in college to provide support, although only one is pursuing a college degree. Adolescents have the confidence and access to talk to house parents when dealing with common or difficult issues. They are guided in their self-discovery and self-expression constantly. Joaquín who works maintenance is also a great support because he grew up in an orphanage and not only teaches the children how to work, but also listens, guides, and advises them. The home mothers and aunts are also supportive in these matters.

- ☐ Obtain support from Hearts of Baja to conduct or provide its skills testing tool to implement with teens over 15 years old.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, in this category, Niños de Baja is at the **SUSTAINING** level. In the home, the children can decide what they want to do in their free time such as going to the park, painting, or doing arts and crafts, as long as it is within the rules. The weekly menu is available for children to view in the kitchen. Children can suggest which dishes will be served on special occasions such as birthdays. From a very young age, the children are taught to be grateful for what they have and receive, so they always thank the cooks. There is more positive feedback about the meals they receive than negative, even with the limited input children currently provide regarding the menu. Children can also choose their clothing daily, except in the instances when a uniform is required for school. Children and caregivers at Niños de Baja are able to receive information about healthcare procedures and ask questions before their administration.

It has been complex for the directors to implement individual development plans for each child in their care. They coordinate with house parents to determine opportunities and achievable objectives. The home provides activities for the children to participate in as well as practice leadership roles. One example of this is a 16-year-old adolescent girl who takes initiative where leadership needs arise. Recently, she took on the task of coordinating skateboard choreography with the girls in her home. The home recognizes this young woman's potential leadership skills and on several occasions, she has been asked to lead different activities. However, at the moment the home does not have any children's committees.

- ☐ Allow children to participate in menu planning at least monthly, incorporating their tastes and preferences.
- ☐ Create individual development plans for each child and update them at least monthly.
- ☐ Create formal children's committees (cleaning, organizing events, etc.) that meet regularly.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is currently at the **THRIVING** level in this category. While the vast majority of the children have birth certificates, those who do not have them are the newest children. For those without birth certificates, DIF lawyers have already been solicited to help the home obtain them. Children are taught to repair damages or wrongdoings by cleaning up damages, repairing what was damaged, or doing extra chores. The children have responsibilities or chores to do each week including being responsible for the care of pets such as Apolo, the dog at the teenagers' house. At Niños de Baja, they respect and celebrate national and local holidays. Some examples of these holidays include Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day,

graduations, and more. If schools ask them to wear special costumes for special celebrations, they provide them at home. The home is garbage-free, and all tools and materials are properly situated. The children are taught about ethics and the democratic process. Additionally, teenagers have the support of the directors, aunts & uncles, and Joaquin, all of whom teach them how to perform various tasks. Children also participate in community activities and in the past have gone to weed and paint together on the soccer fields.

Every Christmas, the home organizes an event to donate clothes, toys, and other gifts to children within the community. All the children of the home participate in distributing the gifts. Children are also informed about the events to help them know what to expect as well as prevent false information from being spread. The children are permitted to attend field trips, especially the older ones, although the schools currently have almost no field trips. Younger children have attended kindergarten camp in the past, and older adolescents have gone to camps out of town. Recently, the home took some teenagers to a concert in Tijuana. Additionally, some children have gone on spiritual retreats at Nueva Vida, and the older ones have gone on vacation to Mexico City.

- ☐ Continue to work with DIF to obtain birth certificates for 100% of the children when possible.



Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. The level of safety of the home is appropriate in relation to the surrounding community. Dormitories have private bathrooms and bathing facilities and are separated by age and gender. All staff have received training from DIF in positive discipline methods and alternatives to corporal punishment. One staff member could not attend training, so DIF specifically returned to provide training to this staff member. There is a policy in place that male staff are not allowed to be alone with any child, regardless of whether or not they are caregivers. The home has implemented a child protection policy that ensures caregivers will not physically, verbally, or emotionally abuse children. In addition, Niños de Baja makes certain children are not hired in exchange for a salary.

Staff members of this home accompany the children on outings outside the property. There is a screening policy for the visitors and volunteers they receive, and most are from churches. The home has a process to check references and background checks for staff and frequent visitors according to local standards. All staff members have clean background checks and have references. With the support of DIF, psychological evaluations are conducted within 1-2 days of arrival for each child to help them work through their trauma.

- ☐ Train staff every six months to identify, prevent and avoid child abuse.
- ☐ Train children over age five with age-appropriate educational sessions on abuse and reporting methods, at least every six months.



Right to Dignity & Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category, Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level. Children are bathed daily, and appropriate precautions are followed when bathing babies. The home encourages children to be kind to one another, correct put-downs or unkind comments, and confront bullying through respect and good examples. Bullying or belittling among children is immediately addressed, although uncommon. The children themselves generally correct offensive behavior or language with new children who arrive at the home.

Children have access to their own bed, sheets, and blankets. Sufficient items like clothing, underwear, and toothbrushes are provided, along with clean towels which are usually replaced every four months. The caregivers discuss the consequences of rule infractions with the children. The home has registered safety protocols and training for both children and staff. The facility has smoke detectors, a fire extinguisher, and a meeting point in case of an emergency, and they will soon receive civil protection training.

In each house, the children have a safe play area for all ages. In addition, they have toys and art supplies appropriate for all ages. They have a material room where items are stored and whenever a house needs supplies, they are provided. Uncle Mike, one of the mission directors who is an active member of the board in the U.S., brings children pictures to paint, which they love to do because they can then sell their paintings. The children can also do extra chores to earn a little money, and the young adults can choose to work in the community to earn wages. Such is the case of the young woman currently in college, who has worked at a local store and a café. The home felt this opportunity to work was important because this particular young woman is timid, and they wanted to help her learn to be more independent and open. Previously, there was a 17-year-old boy who wanted to work. DIF was notified and recommended the following process: Ask for permission from DIF, request a letter of employment, then gather information to be reviewed by a lawyer. As a result, it was determined that it would be better for the young man to wait until he turned 18 years old to start working.

☐ Continue with the good practices as they have been established.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is currently at the **THRIVING** level in this category. In this home, children have the opportunity to participate in a spiritual community. Every Sunday, those living at the home congregate in a church in El Porvenir. On Thursdays, there is a devotional all together for everyone that resides in the home. In addition, each house holds a half hour daily devotional to discuss topics from the Bible. Some of the house parents hired from Ensenada, along with the children under their care, attend churches in Ensenada since most of these couples have some leadership role and many years of congregating in their own churches.

Children are free to participate in daily communal prayer or other spiritual rituals. Likewise, the children learn and participate in religious celebrations, as well as have access to spiritual and religious materials and books. Children are offered opportunities to practice their spiritual learning, such as giving the devotional at church. One of the staff members of Niños de Baja is in charge of the children at church and motivates them to participate in some of the activities and worship groups. Although they do not have a designated place for prayer and meditation on-site, each house holds devotionals in their living room or dining room, and in the evenings each child prays in their bedroom.

- ☐ Designate a space, even a small one, exclusively for prayer and meditation.



Finance Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, in this category, Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level. The directors of this home can record their expenses through a bi-weekly report from the budget provided to them. Fortunately, everything is paid remotely from Tijuana. Only a small budget is provided to the directors in the event that they need to buy medicine, purchase materials, or other expenses. The intention is to have as little money as possible in the home, which helps control expenses better and minimizes the opportunity to misuse funds. There are occasions when the verification of expenses is complicated because caregivers forget to obtain an invoice or they make purchases and do not receive a receipt. Fortunately, in this home, there is a finance committee the directors meet with from time to time to review their finances in detail. There is a very strenuous review of each expense, and items purchased are verified. With the accountant of Niños de Baja, the accounting records are kept updated and are available for review at any time.

The accountant has filed tax returns promptly as per government requirements. Receipts are also kept and the accountant creates a monthly profit and loss statement. A qualified accountant validates the books or records. The home operates according to an annual budget. In the meetings with the board of trustees, several topics are reviewed such as whether someone is going to be hired, what is projected for the year, salary increases, etc. If there is a need to have an additional meeting with the board of trustees, those can be called, generally to discuss financial issues or fundraising, among other topics. The bank account is reconciled monthly. The home has a division of functions for internal control and it is very clear what activities are to be performed by each employee. They have a plan for projects that are over \$25,000 per year. Mike is the person who oversees the planning for projects that will be done each year. There is also an internal audit of the finances.

- ☐ Continue with the good practices as they have been established.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is at the **THRIVING** level in this category. The staff has been trained on the importance of drinking water, its relationship to health, and the need to have safe drinking water in sufficient quantities for domestic use such as drinking, cooking, and bathing. The issue of water has always been very important because there is often not sufficient water in the area, making it a crucial concern. The lawn areas have been affected because they have not been watered consistently due to these constraints. In the past, neighbors have expressed they feel they used too much water. Vehicles, property, and modifications are insured and cannot be sold for profit. New caregivers in the home follow an experienced caregiver for more than a week. There is an organizational chart in place where roles and responsibilities are defined. Hierarchical lines, roles, and processes are all respected. Meetings are held regularly to discuss issues or concerns and how to improve processes. Karla holds meetings about situations that happen in the home to ensure everyone is aware. Previously, meetings were held with the participation of all the staff. Now, only the caregivers within a specific house are included when there is a house-specific situation, regardless of whether it's sensitive or personal. Caregivers are given a written document detailing the terms of their employment and a job description outlining their responsibilities, according to their position.

The home is working to obtain their operation license since updates were required in the civil protection plan and the corresponding adjustments have had to be made. Every morning, the director receives calls from the house parents of the different homes to discuss various relevant situations. This allows the director to provide them with support and guidance about their positions and the situations in the home. Supervisors actualize one-on-one meetings regularly through these daily calls. Caregiver staff have had training sessions on attachment and child development, but it has not happened consistently. Talks have been held with staff on the importance and practical ways to facilitate child participation as well. Niños de Baja is very focused on creating a family environment. The home has an active board of directors that meets at least twice a year. Caregivers have attended training sessions on medical and hygiene matters, caring for a sick child, common illnesses and treatments, emergency procedures, specific care of infants and toddlers, CPR, and first aid. Niños de Baja follows a vacation and annual leave policy for all staff per Mexican laws and regulations. One of the directors' main responsibilities is to ensure employee integrity and see that labor guidelines required by law are followed. For this reason, they make a concentrated effort to conduct all business legally, taking into consideration current regulations and available finances. Employee files include job descriptions, appointment letters, incident reports, ongoing training, job promotions, non-criminal background letters, references, etc. At the beginning of this year, there was a salary increase for everyone according to responsibility and seniority, which included caregivers, administrators, maintenance workers, etc. For new employees, there was also a salary increase of 20%.

- ☐ Train caregivers on infant attachment and development.
- ☐ Train staff on the importance and practical ways to facilitate child participation.

