



Mother Teresa

Plovdiv

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

June | 2023



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

The Family Type Care Center (FTCC) Mother Teresa is a residential-style home for children from the Plovdiv region who are currently unable to enter the foster care system or live with their family of origin.

Mother Teresa provides a home for 15 children ages 13 to 19 in a family-like environment where they have opportunities to develop as individuals and as community members. The director and staff at Mother Teresa work to help the children gain both cognitive and social skills, being especially aware of their needs to overcome traumatic and stressful situations. The FTCC also works with any available family members, including parents and relatives, to minimize the child's stay at Mother Teresa. Family reunification is the highest goal for Mother Teresa, if it is considered to be in the best interests of the child.

Ivanka Popova, the director of Mother Teresa, leads a team of six, including social workers, a staff nurse, and a financial secretary. The FTCC follows a budget set by the municipality and has also set aside a small budget for emergencies.

Good connections and partnerships:

Over the years, Mother Teresa has benefited from the partnership of several organizations, including Agapedia Bulgaria Foundation, Educational Support, Social Teahouse (Varna), Divisi (Plovdiv), Plusheno Meche, and the Movement of Bulgarian Mothers. These organizations provide funds for activities and holidays for the children. Children with special needs also

receive opportunities to develop their talents through additional funding and opportunities. Thanks to these partnerships, the services, and facilities for children and young people have been improved. This, in turn, allows Mother Teresa to continue to function and strive to offer children a happy and normal life.

Recent Accomplishments

- Thanks in part to donations from donors, a new washing machine and dryer were purchased at Mother Teresa
- Several children have been studying music and participating in concerts and other musical events
- Staff turnover has decreased over the past six months



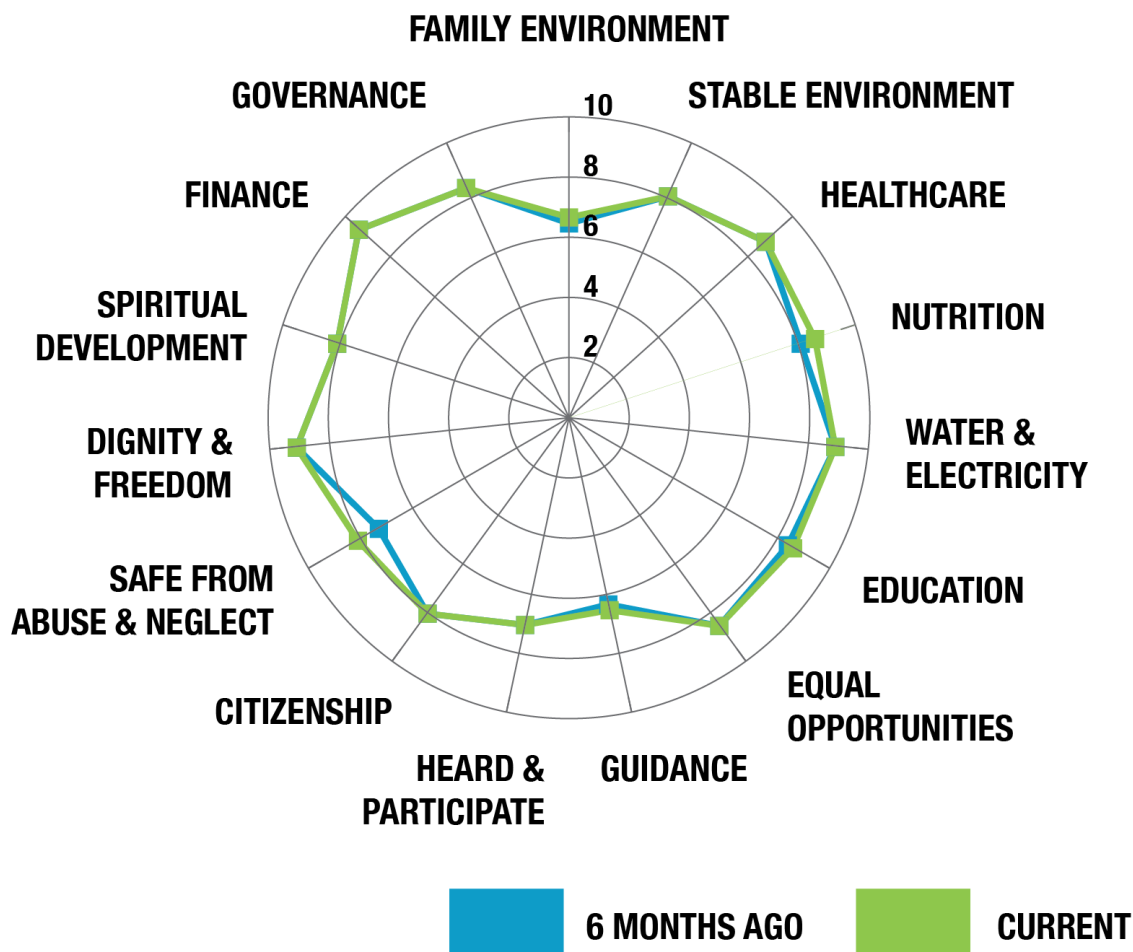
The Thrive Assessment

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

PING-PONG TABLE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Replace the worn out ping-pong table.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	\$800

SUMMER CAMP

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Provide a summer camp experience outside Plovdiv for 15 children.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	\$3,400

BATHROOM REPAIR

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Replace a worn-out toilet.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	\$200



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa increased their score from 6.5 to 6.7 over the past six months by providing training for the staff on developing family characteristics. The home is currently at a SUSTAINING level.

A team of caregivers works eight-hour shifts, ensuring children receive full-time care. Ivanka is trying to create a work environment where social workers are motivated to stay. This is a difficult task because of the lack of motivation on the part of the workers due to low pay and workers' lack of awareness of the responsibility they are taking on. Although many children have biological families, only a few have regular contact with them. Ivanka tries to encourage visitation whenever possible, but at the end of the day, it's a complicated situation that depends on the family and social services.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is at a SUSTAINING level. Ivanka and the team of caregivers try to interact with the children in a caring way, similar to the situation that would be typical in a family. Emphasis is placed on participation in activities such as after-school socializing, discussion, and other opportunities to interact and share in an age-appropriate, healthy way. Ivanka and her team strive to interact positively with the children daily. For example, from time to time, Ivanka or the social workers take the children shopping and encourage them to participate in community service such as neighborhood clean-ups or visiting a local animal shelter.

Discipline is sometimes a problem because some children run away from the FTCC, as a result the police and the child protection department are notified. The staff attends training on positive discipline techniques and alternatives to corporal punishment once a year.

Although psychological therapy is available, most children do not want to participate, and Ivanka cannot force them to.

☐ Provide additional opportunities for psychological therapy.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa maintained a THRIVING level over the past six months. Children have access to basic medical and dental care, and caregivers help them learn good health and hygiene habits. The building is clean. Good health records are kept at Mother Teresa; if a child arrives without all the necessary documents, documents are located (or initiated) and maintained at the home.

Although children have eye exams, this does not happen every year. Children do not undergo orthodontic examinations because they are expensive and considered non-essential. Although the children are encouraged to brush their teeth twice daily, the caregivers struggle to enforce this habit.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa's score increased from a SUSTAINING level to a THRIVING level over the past six months! The FTCC ensures that the children receive 2-3 portions of both fruit and vegetables every day.

The amount of food offered to the children is in accordance with guidelines for public health. Menus are prepared with input from all of the children, who can also help cook or participate in food preparation with the caretakers. The food is prepared following safety and hygiene standards, and the kitchen and dining room are aired out frequently and are generally clean.

Although there is no nutritionist on site, all of the FTCC employees who participate in cooking undergo food preparation safety training and receive a yearly certificate. Four meals are provided daily. The children receive sufficient protein from meat and fish and are given fruit twice daily.

Although all the children don't always like the food that is prepared, this is a matter of taste, not quality or quantity.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Mother Teresa is at a THRIVING level. The water is safe to drink. The FTCC has yearly inspections of the electrical system and the safety of the lighting fixtures. The power goes out very rarely. Mother Teresa hires a part-time building maintenance worker who ensures that there are no burnt-out light bulbs or broken lockers. The sink, showers, and faucets are often broken, mostly by the boys, but everything is repaired. The water is safe to drink.

There are outdoor lights in the courtyard, which is located near a stadium with good nighttime lighting. The buildings are heated and cooled by electric heaters and air conditioners, but if the power goes out, there is no backup plan for heating.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Mother Teresa is at a THRIVING level. Over the past six months, funding has been secured for extra curricular activities and a study area has been set aside in the home.

Every child is enrolled and is expected to go to school. Because of the trauma that some children experience, there is occasional truancy. For example, currently, there is a 15-year-old child who runs away to be with her grandmother, because she feels safe there.

Each of the children has a laptop provided by the city, which was used for learning during the restrictions due to COVID-19. The laptops are kept by the headmistress and given to the children for educational purposes only. All children, except those with an IEP, can count and write. If a child has a learning disability, this is identified at school through a speech therapist and a psychologist. There are opportunities for tutoring every day after school, and social workers at the FTCC are available to help the children with homework. The children all regularly read age-appropriate books together. There is a library of books available for all ages, which are provided by donors.

There is also funding for some of the children to attend extra lessons. In the Divizi House of Musical Magic (Plovdiv), a 17-year-old girl is learning piano through a program provided by Divizi. Children with learning disabilities attend Educational Support for the subjects they struggle with at school. Several girls make decorations for champagne bottles, which earns them pocket money. Teenagers also get involved in making things for Christmas and Easter markets. Other children, if necessary, attend sessions with a psychologist. There are psychologists available at Mother Teresa, and at this stage, there is no need for an additional psychologist.

Each child has a tutor and a mentor with whom they discuss their schoolwork. Grades are also discussed with the director. The social workers and the director also have access to the

children's grades. The mentors discuss each child's school performance with the class teacher each week.

The children are taught to use computers, including Word and Excel, with the support of the Social Tea House foundation in Varna. This year, four teenagers participated there in an internship for 10 days. One girl participated in the Erasmus program in Smolyan with the help of the Social Teahouse.

The children have access to art materials, and four of them particularly enjoy drawing. The children who show musical ability are given a chance to take music lessons and perform - so far, they have participated in two concerts in Plovdiv and two in Stara Zagora. Mother Teresa cooperates with the Agapedia Foundation, the Social Teahouse - Varna, Divisions (Plovdiv), SOS Children's Villages, and the One Heart Foundation to provide educational opportunities.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa maintained a THRIVING level over the past six months. All residents in the FTCC have the right to get an education. Children under the age of 14 are accompanied on their way to school. The young people also participate in planned extracurricular activities, such as cooking, soccer, music lessons, drawing, and English. SOS Children's Villages, an Austrian foundation, provides English language courses. For young people who have reached the age of 16, SOS Children's Villages provides hairdressing and driving courses, so the children can be prepared for real life after leaving home. SOS Children's Villages also pays 6 months' rent for every young person aging out of the orphanage. For the children who are interested in sports, every year they are invited to participate in a soccer world cup for homeless youth, thanks to funding from a special grant. Last year it was held in Cardiff, and this year it was in Perušitsa, which is quite close to Plovdiv. Almost every week, two of the children play soccer.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is currently at a SURVIVING level, but has improved over the past six months. The children have access to a trusted adult who can help them navigate their teenage years and are encouraged to participate in either individual or group therapy, which is available on a weekly basis at the home.

Some children are required to have weekly meetings with a psychologist, as ordered by the Department of Child Protection. Each child receives a psychological evaluation when admitted to Mother Teresa. If needed, psychological care is available for 6 months up to one year. Half of the children visit a psychologist and have support for difficult topics and circumstances in their lives.

No matter what happens, many of the children--even the ones who have aged out of the center--come back for advice and guidance from Ivanka, who has built a strong rapport and relationship with them.

- ☐ Develop a written education and work plan for each child over the age of 15.
- ☐ Provide an additional psychologist.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is currently at a SUSTAINING level. Children in the FTCC can decide how to dress, what to do in their free time, and choose and plan their menu.

Mother Teresa also gives children the opportunity to have leadership roles. Two years ago, they had “Director for a Day” and a “Social Worker for a Day” initiatives where a teenager was allowed to play the role of a director or a social worker for a day. However, when conducting these initiatives, the director and the social workers had to try to prevent the children from confusing the roles. The young person with the best grades in school has been allowed to lead in both initiatives.

Another example is a young man who left home and currently works at Liebherr manufacturing company and at a car wash. He will get married in December to a girl living in the FTCC. The young man wants to apply to be a social worker at Mother Teresa, but because he has close friendships, the management of Mother Teresa will wait another 1-2 years.

The leadership also facilitates children's commissions at Mother Teresa. Meetings are held three times a week, and careful minutes of the meetings are kept. The children are enthusiastic about the process and keep the records themselves.

- ☐ Create an appropriate Individualized Development Plan for each student.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is currently at the SUSTAINING level. Each child has a birth certificate. Children are taught to take responsibility for their actions. For example, a child must pay for intentional damage to property with his or her own pocket money. Young people are also expected to participate in responsibilities around the center and to maintain their personal schedules. For example, children must turn in their phones at 9:00 pm, and 10 pm is the curfew on weekdays and 11 pm on weekends. Breakfast is served before 6:45 am on school days.

Ivanka and her team model etiquette and good behavior. When a child breaks the house rules,

the team uses the situation as an opportunity to talk with the child, perhaps repeatedly, in addition to natural consequences that follow inappropriate behavior.

The young people also participate in community service activities and social initiatives, such as city cleanup initiatives or visiting shelters for stray dogs. Some children were able to help the people in the flooded villages about a month ago.



Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is currently on a SUSTAINING level and increased their score over the past six months by ensuring that incoming children are assessed by therapists to see if they need counseling or therapy.

The staff at Mother Teresa treats the children respectfully and avoids physical punishment not only because it is prohibited by law, but also because they do not believe in this method of discipline. Once a year, staff members attend a seminar on positive discipline techniques and alternatives to corporal punishment. The staff members are not allowed to be alone with a child in their room for more than 5 minutes. At night there are enhanced security measures in the area. The building also has bars on the ground floor windows.

Staff members and social workers at Mother Teresa model appropriate behavior. If a child needs to be corrected, the caregivers always begin with a discussion to clarify rules. Further bad behavior is followed by an appropriate punishment.

There are no security problems at Mother Teresa. Girls and boys live on separate floors. However, social workers do not attend training on how to prevent abuse. There is an official rule for checking in visitors at Mother Teresa, but it is not always followed. Anyone working at Mother Teresa must provide documentation that shows there have been no legal proceedings against them.

☐ Provide abuse recognition and prevention training for all staff members.



Right to Dignity & Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Mother Teresa is at a THRIVING level. The children are treated well. They have the right to a private life within the limits of what is permitted; for example, if they want to leave the house, they must always ask for permission. The building has capacity for 15 children, with four bedrooms, three of which have four beds and one with three. The children's rooms are assigned based on gender, age, and other needs.

The children have nicknames for each other that would be considered derogatory if one of the staff used them, but they use them in between themselves without feeling offended. Ivanka

and her team teach good manners and respect for others. For example, children make a very good impression on people because they always speak respectfully, using the correct grammatical formal terms when addressing adults.

Twice a year, Ivanka takes the children on a one-week holiday - in the summer to the sea and winter to the mountains. If the total amount is not covered by donors, the rest is taken from their budget. One of the organizations sponsoring them is the Movement of Bulgarian Mothers.

To stay at a thriving level, Ivanka and the staff provide additional opportunities for the children to participate in activities outside the home, including important local events.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is currently at the SUSTAINING level. The children do not usually take part in a spiritual community. However, they have the right to attend church if they want to. The home celebrates important religious holidays such as Easter, Christmas, birthdays, and the liturgical name days of the children, Ivanka, and the team. The only spiritual or religious material available and accessible is the Bible.

To move to the thriving level, the home could provide more spiritual and religious materials and encourage children to attend church and liturgy if they like. One possibility could be for children to learn about the Orthodox Church's role in Bulgarian history.

- ☐ Provide spiritual and religious materials appropriate to the culture of the children.
- ☐ According to the wishes of the children, make arrangements for them to participate in religious services as appropriate.



Finance Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, Mother Teresa is at a THRIVING level. The FTCC has a full-time accountant. All expenses are accounted for, and there is no misuse of funds. Every year, an internal control and inventory procedure as well as an audit is carried out by order of the mayor. Everything that is bought with FTCC funds is accounted for.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Mother Teresa is currently at the SUSTAINING level. The home meets all licensing, audit, and management requirements and holds regular monthly staff meetings. The staff and director keep all incident reports and training records and attend training with a supervisor (an external psychologist and psychotherapist) on boundaries, training, and work methodologies. Team meetings are held every month, and individual meetings are held every 4 months. The FTCC does not have a board of directors, as this role is performed by the mayor.



Current Improvement Partners



Hope • Life • Future for Orphans

One Heart Bulgaria

One Heart Bulgaria was founded in 2003 in order to improve the lives of children living in Bulgarian orphanages. Since that time, they have impacted thousands of children through their programs and initiatives. Visit www.oneheart-bg.org for more information!

For a list of projects and opportunities to coordinate on go to
www.ACHF.org/Projects



A CHILD'S
+ HOPE
FOUNDATION