

Niños de Baja

Mexico

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

July | 2023



Overview of Children's Home

Background & Mission

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. Their future goals include continuing to provide the best care for children, breaking the generational chains of abuse, addiction and hopelessness, and providing loving alternatives. In addition to encouraging children to continue their education and training after high school, seeking to maintain and expand their education fund. Ultimately, Niños de Baja wants children to become responsible and active members of society. This includes being strong husbands, fathers, wives, and mothers. They would love to see these adults return with their children one day and tell them with pride: "I grew up here. This was my family, and they loved me."

Recent Accomplishments

It was possible to pay the psychologist's fees to get the children to receive psychological care. They began training with our partner ESPERE.

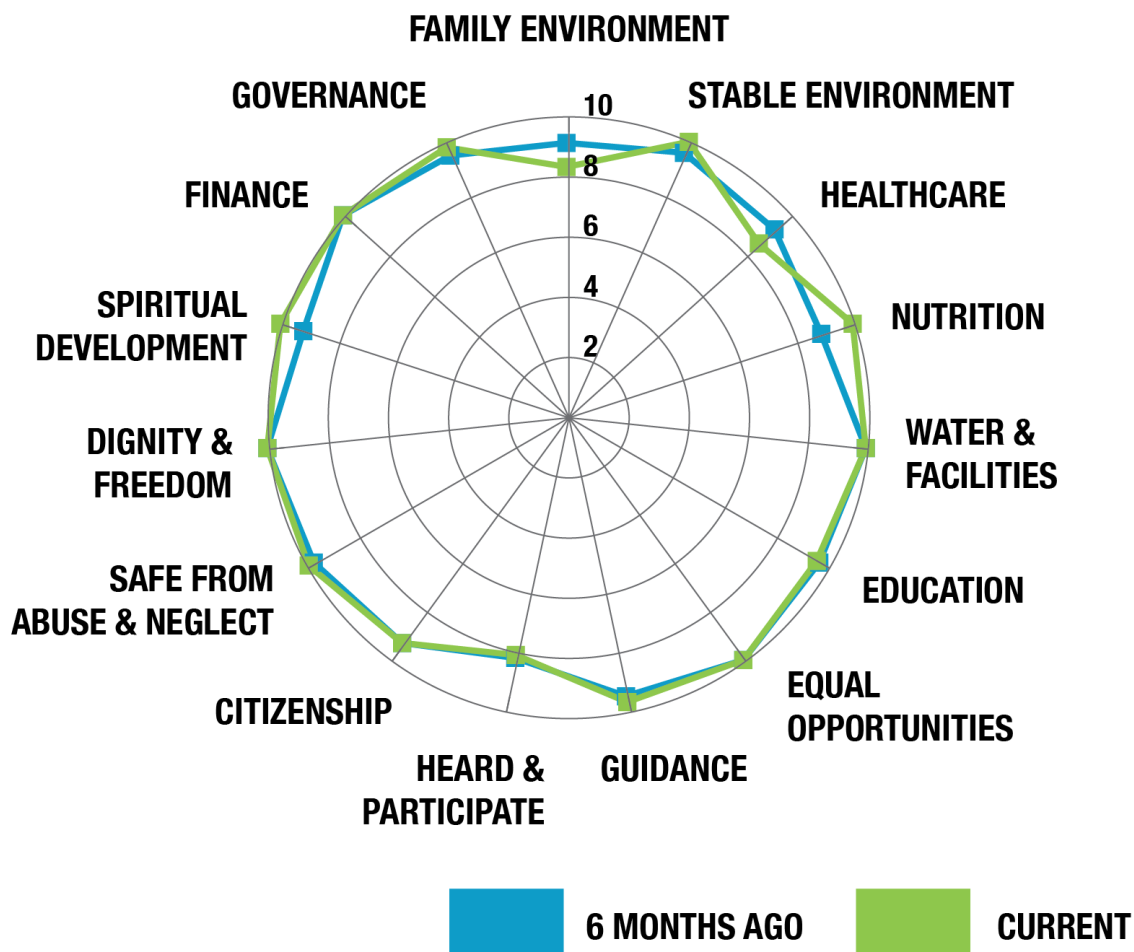


The Thrive Assessment

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 compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

Current Thrive Scale



Strategic Initiatives

SCHOOL VEHICLE REPAIR

PROJECT SUMMARY	In the home, Niños de Baja, they have a 96 Ford Van that they use to transport children both to school and for some group outings. Currently, this van has been out of use because it requires several major repairs. To avoid an accident they have stopped using it. The purpose of this financial request is to make appropriate repairs to continue getting children to their schools.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$29,362.86 MXN (~\$1,794.48 USD)



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja's facilities are divided by houses within the property according to the gender and age of the children. A maximum of 12 children live in each of the houses. In the vast majority of these homes they have full-time caregivers (mommies and daddies) and the baby dorm has caregivers who are on rotating shifts (aunties). When children first arrive at this home, they do not always have the information of their origin because the information arrives incomplete from DIF and the police. More has been found out about children through what they share themselves. In order to do great work within Niños de Baja, the directors have strengthened their daily work through the information suggested in the book: "Effective Orphan Care Ministry" by Dr. Larry E. Banta. This book has been very useful in bringing about the great work of ensuring that children have a better quality of life. One of the author's finest achievements is that he was able to personally train caregivers about his book. To continue strengthening their daily work, staff are currently taking training on trauma, attachment and various topics with the ESPERE organization. They also have the support of the home psychologist who provides guidance and follow-up with the caregivers. For the time being, they do not have an established written plan for the incorporation, training, and evaluation of caregivers, however, they have a daily strategy that allows for a very broad knowledge of the activities that need to be carried out. Potential newcomers or new caregivers have conversations with other experienced caregivers to strengthen their knowledge. Additionally, they have established a protocol where potential caregivers are first introduced to the homes, the children, and the activities that are carried out in order to show them the reality. They have very well-organized activities and roles to avoid burdening caregivers (house parents and aunties) with activities. Siblings are encouraged to live together, eat together and participate in activities together. When it comes to visits with the children, it is the DIF that is responsible for regulating them. The Niños de Baja team does intervene when talking with family members to prevent them from deceiving the children by telling them that they are going to take them home soon.

- ☐ Get a record of where each child comes from.
- ☐ Continue trauma training with the ESPERE organization.
- ☐ Develop a plan for the recruitment, training and evaluation of caregivers.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAININGSUSTAINING

THRIVING

The general rules of the home are clear and understandable to everyone who lives in it. These rules are established by the directors, however, the caretakers (house parents) of each house have the freedom to adjust them according to the children's needs. Children are prevented from calling each other by nicknames and workers speak with respect to children, managers and all staff in general. The consequences of infractions are based on positive discipline and are appropriate according to age. Children can participate in free games during periods when there is no activity planned. On a tri annual basis, caregivers meet with the psychologist to discuss specific topics. Additionally, they talk with the directors about how to create a good environment and incorporate family values. To promote a family environment and to provide physical, emotional, and educational stability for the children, care is taken to ensure that caregivers have everything they need to be able to work in the home as long as possible. This has been successful because most of the caregivers have been working there for between 8 and 9 years. They are given the freedom to stay as long as they decide. The caregivers play with the children and carry out recreational activities on a daily basis and the record of these activities is sent to the director for her knowledge. Recently, they went swimming at Las Palmeras Recreational Park which created great memories. At Niños de Baja, every child's birthday is celebrated. Each house is given the freedom to throw its own party in their own way.

☐ Continue with the great work they have done in this category.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Health care is very important to the directors of Niños de Baja. Which is why the children are regularly reminded of hygiene habits such as: washing their hands frequently and brushing their teeth two to three times a day. In addition, children participate in school vision brigades, receive routine dental checkups, and are provided prompt dental treatment when needed. There are currently two girls in need of braces. Children are also taken to the doctor every time they get sick or when they need to have a follow up for an illness. Children are constantly checked for lice and if they are found, they are treated immediately. As such, they have had good moments where they haven't had a lice problem. Currently, there is no medical record for each child. Medical information is only kept in a notebook when treatments and medical conditions are followed up. For the time being, only children who have spent a lot of time at home (those who are currently in middle school and high school) have their vaccination records; children who have recently arrived at the home do not have a vaccination record because no updated document has been given. In this home they have a network of specialist doctors who support various medical needs. They currently have two children in diapers and they have a very well defined diaper changing routine. In this house the caregivers cautiously follow three shifts to prevent children from getting diaper rash. Additionally, adolescent girls have access to feminine hygiene products in sufficient quantities and are taught about menstrual hygiene care and the disposal of feminine products by caregivers. Niños de Baja has kits in every house and they strive to supply them constantly. The directors have a fund for any type of emergency, which has been used for emergency medical care that children may require. Appropriate measures, training, and treatment plans have been implemented for children with special conditions, like nutrition issues.

- ☐ Prepare a medical record for each child that includes: medical history, growth measurements, medication, incidents and everything related to their health.
- ☐ Give orthodontic follow-up to the two girls who require braces.
- ☐ Make sure that children have annual general medical checkups.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja prepares delicious and tasty dishes for all the children who live in the five houses. The main goal is that they share the sacred food together in the dining area, but if any of the children cannot be there during mealtime, their portion is saved and then they eat in the house they live in. In this home, every child consumes enough calories a day. The food is prepared in a hygienic way, it is delicious and appetizing. Every day, children consume protein, fruits, and vegetables in order to contribute to optimal physical and mental development. The home is fumigated once a month, so the kitchen, dining and food storage areas are free of pests and toxic substances. The previous management administration worked with a nutritionist who put together menus that are still in use. Additionally, the cooks took a course in years past on food safety and preparation, which has allowed them to continue to apply this knowledge.

- ☐ Lean on a nutrition specialist to assess each of the children and assess whether menus need to be updated.
- ☐ Assess with a nutrition specialist that current menus are viable and appropriate for children.
- ☐ Seek new food safety and preparation training for people who prepare food.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Recently, Niños de Baja facilities have been monitored by government authorities to check that they are safe. They have a civil protection plan that is in operation. They are currently under renovation of their Internal Civil Protection Program because they made modifications to one of the bathrooms and adjustments to one of the rooms. Niños de Baja follows all the regulations that govern the home, therefore, they comply with all local requirements and codes. That is why renewals are carried out in a timely manner in accordance with the regimes and laws that regulate them. The home has registered safety protocols and training in order for children and employees. They have an emergency plan in case of fire, flood, earthquake and disaster. In addition, all staff have had training in civil protection issues. The facilities have smoke detectors, a fire extinguisher, and meeting points in the event of a natural disaster. The Niños de Baja facilities are in good condition; they have two people who maintain the five houses, so that the faucets in the sinks and shower heads are in good condition. They rely on a list of needs in order to best maintain the home. The facilities in each house are well lit, which keeps things safe for the children and all staff. The electrical infrastructure is in good condition and they are securely connected. The houses where children live are able to withstand heavy rains and winds. They have a drinking water supplier that constantly keeps the storage tanks maintained. When the power goes out, they have an electric generator, which they use exclusively to power refrigerators to prevent food from spoiling. Children have easy access to drinking water and it's available for whenever they need a drink. To have constant access to water, they have water stores and the pump is turned on daily. If they run out of water, they request water pipes to refill their battery. To help with water consumption, staff have received counsel about taking care of drinking water, its relationship with health, and especially the need to have drinking water stored due to a shortage of water in the area.

☐ Continue the excellent work that has been done in this category.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Currently, in Niños de Baja, the vast majority of children attend school from kindergarten to high school. The majority of children attend the secondary level. All children over 9 years old are able to articulate the letters of the alphabet, read, write, and can also perform basic math operations. Currently, they have three children who are falling behind in school and to support them to reach the expected level, they rely on the school programs they attend full time. There they carry out activities that help them to strengthen their learning and knowledge of reading and mathematics, all thanks to the program known as USAER. In addition, in the same educational institution, through a diagnosis, they detect children with learning problems and provide them with the necessary care and monitoring to achieve the expected objectives. Within Niños de Baja, there is a plan to strengthen the educational support of the caregivers (parents) in each household so that they can continue to improve in school and advance their learning. As for the review of grades, the directors together with caregivers (dads and moms) are responsible for reviewing and evaluating the next steps. Children receive tutoring from their caregiver whenever necessary. In Niños de Baja, they have a school transport to take the children to their schools, however, for the time being, the vehicle is out of service because several repairs are needed. In every house they have books according to the age of the children. Especially the little ones who have a lot of books and that are well used as they are often read to using different tones to attract their attention. Between all the houses there are more than 75 books, which is very useful for the older children to practice reading frequently. All the houses that make up Niños de Baja have access to the internet and computers, and the children have received instruction at school on how to use the computer. They also have a space for educational activities and have a bookcase with a printer that can be used. All children have educational material available to use and play with whenever they like. They have a funding program that can be applicable as soon as youth are in high school.

- ☐ Provide the opportunity for each child to receive, at least once a week, personalized and distraction-free tutoring.
- ☐ Repair the school vehicle to transport children to their schools.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

All children have a designated space in which to keep their personal items and special care is taken to keep all letters and photographs. In addition, all children have the opportunity to go to school, have books, supplies, receive school counseling, psychological care and attend extracurricular activities. Inside the home, the necessary adaptations have been made for all the children who have required it, such as Tony. The boy arrived with some limitations and thanks to the support of the managers, the staff, the adaptations in his bathroom and the provision of assistive devices, he can now walk and run without the support of his walker. Niños de Baja has a plan for the transition to adulthood and a written university support plan, in which all young people have the opportunity to receive this support whenever they wish to continue their studies in a trade or university. This university plan contains established guidelines in which young people commit to complying with them and if they are not complied with, their support can be withdrawn. Mentors and caregivers act as models of good behavior for children and are available to direct, guide, and support them. This has allowed their intervention model to be successful.

- ☐ Continue with the great work they have been doing in this category.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children who live in Niños de Baja have the opportunity to decide what activity they want to do in their spare time, as long as these activities are under the guidelines of the home. Every time children express a need to their caregivers, managers, or staff they are listened to and supported in their needs. Children have leadership activities that allow them to strengthen their skills and abilities. Every day, children have the opportunity to choose what clothes they want to wear, except when they go to school where they wear a uniform. On special occasions or birthdays, children can suggest the dishes to prepare, according to their tastes and preferences. Both children and caregivers have the opportunity to receive information about healthcare procedures and are given the opportunity to ask questions prior to their intervention. They are told everything that is going to happen within this medical care, all in order to avoid a traumatic situation. The directors are very aware of the development of children, so they coordinate with the caregivers (parents and mothers) of each household to identify those opportunities and objectives to be achieved in the short and long term.

- ☐ Allow children to participate in the planning of the menu, incorporating their own taste, at least on a monthly basis when possible.
- ☐ Implement individual development plans for each child and update them on a monthly basis.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja has a written activity profile for each of the areas. When they are looking for new caregivers, they rely on their corresponding profile, in addition to relying on the recommendations of their acquaintances and church members to strengthen the hiring decision. Caregivers are evaluated by the DIF to determine if they are quality caregivers and according to the results issued, the necessary follow-up is given by the directors. In the event that the DIF issues a ruling that the caregivers are not suitable, a decision is made not to hire them. In relation to issues of sex education, there are directors, caregivers (dads and moms), and managers who talk to adolescents over 13 years of age about responsible sexual behavior as their physical changes, puberty, etc. take place. It is worth mentioning that they have the support of the director's mother, who is a social worker and also supports them when they ask her questions about the subject. Caregivers offer respectful behavior towards children and their co-workers, they teach children to take care of their bodies, to be autonomous, to know and respect the rules, and what to expect if they do not follow them. With the intention of providing the best to all those who live in Niños de Baja, on a weekly basis, at least 6 children receive psychological care sessions. To strengthen children's abilities, they are taught to develop skills such as: making flour tortillas, bread, cookies, spaghetti, etc. In the case of older adolescents and young people, they are taught various crafts such as: mixing, laying plaster, etc., in order to acquire knowledge that in the future may be useful to them in their adult life and work life. They are also supported in providing them with knowledge and tools in accordance with their academic concerns. To follow up on continuous care with children, they are prohibited from being in pairs in the same bed, and this care is reinforced through a policy that addresses the issue of sexual behavior. In addition, the psychologist and other specialists have provided guidance to caregivers on how to address and manage sexual behaviors. In Niños de Baja, there is a documented plan in which students after they turn 15, can access a scholarship to pay for their uniforms, transportation, books, lunch, etc. To do this, they have a contract that allows them to commit to the guidelines, and with this they want to promote responsibility. There is a life skills program, which is not documented in writing, in which children can participate regularly to increase other skills, such as girls who recently changed a car tire.

- ☐ Develop a written plan for teens over the age of 15 for future education or work after completing their time at home.
- ☐ Design a written life skills program in which children can participate regularly.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In Niños de Baja, the vast majority of children who live there have their corresponding birth certificate. Within each of the homes, children are encouraged to carry out personal tasks on a weekly basis that allows them to foster a sense of responsibility in them. Such is the case that in every house children have pets and are responsible for taking care of them, buying them their kibble, and keeping their space clean. In the home, children are encouraged to participate in recreational activities that are outside the home, all with prior authorization from the DIF. In addition, children have participated in diverse activities that allow them to provide their support for the benefit of improving their community. Children are also taught topics about ethics, democracy, and government processes. Adolescents over 15 years of age are taught life skills. The directors of this home have always sought opportunities to train caregivers and staff on issues that contribute to enhancing children's development. For this reason, caregivers have been trained in topics that have boosted children's ability to be responsible. Niños de Baja celebrates September 16th a Mexican holiday, Thanksgiving, and other significant local festivities. The home is free of debris and material that prevents children from moving freely. In this home, children are informed of the events that take place to keep them informed and to prevent the spread of false information.

☐ Find alternatives so that all children have their birth certificates.



Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home, children are very important and are the reason the home exists. For this reason, they motivate them and teach them to be kind, to respect each other, and to set a good example. They also teach them to take care of themselves, to be self-sufficient, and to keep a good hygiene routine to stay in good health. The children bathe daily and have their own bed, sufficient clothing, underwear, bed linen, clean towels, and their own toothbrush. There is also a clear dialogue with children according to their level of understanding about the consequences of rule violations. Each of the houses that make up Niños de Baja has an outdoor play area and a patio. They also have age-appropriate toys and art supplies and are available to everyone whenever they need it. Kids have the chance to do extra tasks or activities to earn a little money. Likewise, teens are given the opportunity to work in the community and earn extra money.

☐ Continue with the great work they have been doing in this category.



Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The distribution of the houses that make up Niños de Baja allows for adequate security in accordance with the community that surrounds them. Each house is separated by gender and age in accordance with government regulations. In addition, inside each of the houses they have private spaces so that children can bathe and get dressed. On the part of the caregivers, the directors and the psychologist, they try to achieve great trust with the children and to dialogue with them about the topic of abuse and ways to report it, as well as to motivate them to express any situation related to this topic. In addition, since the children are admitted to this home, children have psychological evaluations and continuous monitoring to help them work through their traumas. Currently, Niños de Baja has two babies, who are very well cared for and they make sure that they spend most of the day outside their cribs and rocking chairs. To protect children from abuse and neglect, all staff at this home have received training in positive discipline techniques. They also have policies that prohibit spending time alone between a child and an adult, protecting children from being physically, psychologically, verbally, sexually and emotionally abused by caregivers, and prevent child exploitation. They have clear policies for visitors. They have an established process to check the background of workers and volunteers through referrals obtained through churches. On the other hand, caregivers regularly evaluate children for signs of abuse and/or neglect and follow established procedures to report any findings, and they also carry out constant checks. Caregivers always accompany children to the outings that are required and need to be made.

- ☐ Train Staff at least every six months on how to identify, prevent, and avoid abuse.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja gives everyone the opportunity to practice the Christian religion by being part of the Sunday church services in El Porvenir. There, children can freely participate in prayer and spiritual rituals, including community worship and prayer. To continue strengthening children's church knowledge, once a week a devotional is held with all those who live in the home. In addition, everyone in each house has a half hour daily devotional where they share topics from the Bible. If children arrive at Niños de Baja at an early age, they are introduced to the Christian religion, however, as they grow up, they have the opportunity to decide and choose how they want to continue. Inside the home they have spiritual and religious books, which are available and accessible to everyone. The living room or dining room is used as a prayer space and at night each child performs their own prayer inside their bedroom.

- ☐ Continue the great work they are doing in this category.



Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja records all the income and expenses that are generated day by day. All receipts are kept and a profit and loss statement is drawn up. With this information, a biweekly report is made and a profit and loss statement is also created every 15 days. In addition, expenses are labeled and prepaid from the accounting office located in the city of Tijuana, B.C. The bank account is also reconciled on a monthly basis through the meter and with these actions they minimize the misuse of funds. On the other hand, the directors of the household have a small fund to cover special medication needs or to make urgent purchases. Niños de Baja has an extraordinary finance committee, with which the directors meet and together they review each of the expenses thoroughly. The qualified accountant of Niños de Baja maintains the accounting records and they are available for review at any time. Tax returns are filed annually in accordance with government requirements, and they are also audited internally on a monthly basis. They currently have a project plan of more than \$25,000 per year. Mr. Mike is responsible for planning the projects to be carried out each year. In other words, the home operates according to an annual budget in agreement with the Board of Trustees, who are available to meet in an extraordinary way to discuss these issues or other interests related to finance, fundraising, etc. The household has a very well defined organization chart in which the division of functions for better internal control is visible and specified.

☐ Continue with the great work they have been doing in this category.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In Niños de Baja, both the vehicles, the property, and the modifications that can be made to the home are insured so that they cannot be sold for their own benefit. All these assets are in the name of Home NDB, A.C. The house is currently in the process of renewing the operating license. This home meets all the governance requirements required by Mexican laws. They have an active board of directors that meets at least twice a year. In other words, the directors have been a great example of the good work that is done in the home as they are very focused on creating a family environment and they meet frequently with collaborators. In addition, they have made it a priority to ensure the integrity and guidelines of both children and collaborators. This has allowed them to always be at the forefront in following the various regulations that govern the home as well as in labor issues. This level of awareness has allowed all the employees of this home to have a document that describes the activities to be carried out and to have all the benefits established by law. Within Niños de Baja, they have a job profile for when they are looking for new caregivers and they carry out a process, in which the new caregivers of the houses follow an experienced caregiver for more than a week. Care staff have had training sessions on attachment and child development, trauma, and practical ways to facilitate child participation. They have also participated in medical and hygiene training sessions on caring for a sick child, common diseases and treatments, emergency measures and specific training for the care of infants and young children, CPR, and first aid. Employee records are kept, including the job description, letter of appointment, incident reports, continuing training, employment promotions, non-criminal background letters, references, etc.

- ☐ Establish consistent weekly meetings with staff to provide guidance and support on the activities of their positions.
- ☐ Train staff on attachment, development, and child care.
- ☐ Continue with the process of renewing the operating license.



Current Improvement Partners



Espere

Espere Community Counseling is a center that delivers psychological therapy services to kids, adults, and survivors of trauma. They strive to increase awareness and access to mental health services so people learn there is a name for their pain, they are not alone, and they can get better. Espere partners with ACHF in Baja California to provide caregiver support through trainings, workshops, and roundtables” on ways to support the mental health and wellbeing for the children in their care as well as their own self-care. Additionally, they offer support to therapists working in our partner orphanages.

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

