

El Refugio

Mexico

A group of hikers is seen from behind, walking along a dirt trail that winds down a grassy hillside. The trail leads towards a sandy beach and the ocean. The hikers are wearing various backpacks and casual clothing. The background features rugged, rocky cliffs and a clear sky.

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

April | 2024



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

El Refugio exists to support at-risk young girls coming from abuse, neglect and dangerous situations. The directors strive for a family-style, structured environment that fosters healing, personal growth and spiritual development. The home puts a high value on education and quality experiences that propel their girls into a healthy future.

Recent Accomplishments

Full Security system installed.

Former child of the home recently got married!

Finished a template for goal setting for the girls and an evaluation about their contribution.

Worked on life skills with the girls including building a house together with a team.

Another successful skill has been hatching chickens and ducks and taking care of them.

Opportunities to choose and learn about new foods. Most of the girls participated in making international foods and trying new foods with teams and on their own: Italian gnocchi, lasagna, Thai noodles, Indian curry, apple strudel from Germany, Romanian stew and of course Mexican food!

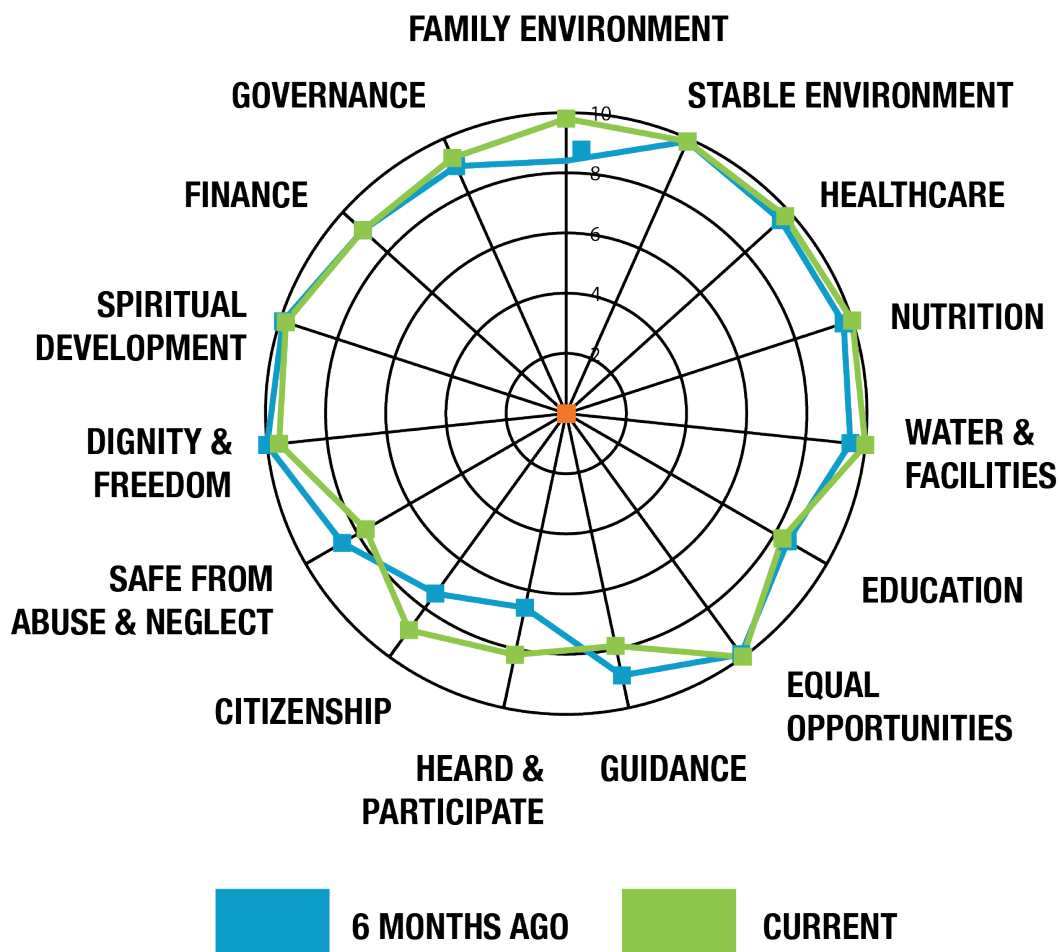


The Thrive Assessment

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 and compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

Current Thrive Scale



Strategic Initiatives

EDUCATION ROOM

PROJECT SUMMARY	Currently, El Refugio is using the dining hall for tutoring and homeschooling. The school books and materials are currently stored in the office, the directors' apartment, the girls' rooms and in the dining hall. It would be helpful to have all the materials they need located in one space, as well as a dedicated space where the girls are not interrupted by others coming in and out for different purposes. They are also hoping to purchase higher level Spanish reading materials for the girls to have access to as well. To outfit this room and create an initial learning space they are hoping to build 5 bookcases, 8 feet high with 6 adjustable shelves and cupboard doors. They also wish to put in 6 modules with 1 drawer each and 2 shelves with doors. These would be connected with 30' of Formica countertop. There would be space between each module to place a chair so that each girl would have a working area.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	Part one: 5 bookcases of 4000 pesos the unit, 20000 MXN pesos or 1,250 USD

PART TWO OF ABOVE PROJECT

PROJECT SUMMARY	See above
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	Part 2: Modules and counter = 15,000 MXN pesos or \$940 USD

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE TRAINING FOR STAFF

PROJECT SUMMARY	Access to staff training
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	Unknown cost



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has sufficient and consistent caregivers who have all been serving in the home for five years or more. Randy and Sandy, founders of the home, have functioned as the directors since the home began. Laurisa is Randy and Sandy's daughter and has grown up in the home and is now acting as Subdirector. Isabel is a vital part of leadership and has been with the home for more than 5 years. They function as a family whenever possible and have excellent onboarding training and procedures. For example, Sandy has described that each new staff member is required to shadow a senior staff member for many weeks and is not allowed to administer discipline or make weighty decisions on their own without first consulting senior staff, and learning the home's systems and cultures. Children work with social workers regularly and are encouraged to maintain family connections and sibling bonding. In addition, El Refugio prioritizes reunification with family whenever possible. They comply with the DIF required monthly "family visitation day" and celebrate with children who have the opportunity to return to family or otherwise launch away from the home into a safe and healthy situation. Staff do not regularly participate in training for Trauma Informed Care; they would be interested in pursuing classes as available.

- All caregivers participating in a course on Trauma informed Care within the next 6 months.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home meets or exceeds all requirements for nutrition in the home. Each child eats a balanced diet that has been evaluated by a nutritionist and is rich in protein, fruits and vegetables. It can be observed that while many meals are nutritious yet pleasantly basic, they truly enjoy times for special meals with a lot of beautiful variety and more costly ingredients. They employ creativity in their day to day menu planning to include special touches that make even the most basic meals less mundane. The kitchen and dining area are open, spacious, clean and kept free of pests. Food is served and prepared in a hygienic and appealing manner.

- Continue current habits.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home complies with all state mandated health and safety requirements, including documented vaccination records, proper hygiene protocol, doctor, dental and vision exams, and a completed medical file for each child. Sandy is very meticulous by nature, although as a high achiever, she tends to be hard on herself and would likely not agree. From the outside though, it is clear that she is extremely gifted in organizing the home's files and keeping the home up to date with the typical requirements. They have sufficient first aid kits, and the children are taught proper hygiene and self-care. As with all children, they have their share of struggles in getting the girls to practice those healthy habits, but the home does teach them with relentless consistency. The home self reports that some of the older girls have not received a wellness check recently. They plan on taking advantage of the ACHF health clinic scheduled this August 2024.

- Attend Health Clinic scheduled for August 2024.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has an environment full of love, affection, and stability. Casual observers and regular visitors alike can attest to the fact that the girls are relatively well adjusted and are learning daily what it looks like to be healthy, strong individuals. They excel in the areas of positive discipline, appropriate rules and expectations, family dynamic, and consistent caregivers. An example of positive discipline played out recently during their church services. Directors Randy and Sandy desire that the girls take the opportunity to learn and discipline themselves to pay attention to their weekly church sermons. An idea they had was to give every girl a notebook to reflect and take notes on. The natural first instinct was to give a consequence to anyone not engaging in this assignment. But in the end, it was decided that each girl that took initiative and saw this as an opportunity for themselves, were given a chance to celebrate together with going out for tacos. This example not only highlights an example of positive discipline, but also illustrates the home's willingness to learn and grow. To change and adapt as situations arise. What an admirable characteristic for anyone, especially parents and caregivers. They self identified staff meetings and time off for directors as areas that they can improve upon.

- Setting up a staff meeting within the next 90 days to discuss ideas for improving effective discipline and behavior.
- Setting a goal for 1 date night within the next 60 days for the married directors, and one complete day off monthly for directors and subdirectors.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home currently meets and exceeds all standards for adequate water and facilities. Water is consistently provided for flushing, washing, sanitation and consumption. The facility meets code in all state mandated areas including fire, electricity and water. They have even been identified by the department of infants and children as a safe zone during a catastrophe to receive people who are without shelter.

- Continue current efforts.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home excels in most areas academically. The Director is a retired schoolteacher and puts a high value on education. Staff works tirelessly with each individual and most children are learning at grade level or above. The students who are behind or struggling have been identified, and the plan has been put in place to improve based on each child's capacity and potential. Educational resources have been made equally available to all children and tutors are available to children as needed, the majority of the time. The directors expressed a desire to formally evaluate children who may suffer from learning disabilities to better equip their staff to teach them adequately.

- Seek resource to properly evaluate children presenting with potential learning disorders.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home currently excels in this area. All children are treated equally and with respect. All opportunities are equally presented, regardless of age, gender, or social status. A tangible example that comes to mind of equal treatment and respect is that each girl's personality and abilities are taken into account when the home endeavors to provide opportunities for extra curricular activities. If a particular activity is not a match for a certain girl, another is found to honor their individual personality and physical differences. All children struggling with disabilities have reasonable accommodations to allow for equal treatment and educational advancement. Safe same-gender role models are available to all children. The home values individuality while maintaining a family culture by doing many activities as a large group that foster a team spirit. Each child is respected in their personhood and given opportunities to own personal items that are meaningful and bring value to their lives such as birthday and Christmas gifts, and clothing that is in line with their own personal style.

- Continue in current intentional structure and created culture.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home expressed that while they believe all children are fully supported and guided by staff and role models, they desire to improve in several areas. Namely, their ability to give attention to educating the children about their bodies and boundaries, setting up clear guidelines that are easily understood and consistent, proper training for caregivers, and educating the children on appropriate sexual behaviors. They would like to prioritize the formulation and documentation of policies concerning all of the above. They also desire to have a written plan of action for every teen transitioning into adulthood. Roadblocks to achieving these goals lie in insufficient staffing and lack of time.

- Schedule leadership meetings and times to document plans.
- Seek proper training for both children and staff on the topic of consent and responsible sexual behavior.
- Document policies concerning sexual behaviors.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children are typically kept busy and productive through group and extra curricular activities, church, etcetera, but are permitted to make reasonable choices about what they would like to do during their free time. Within reason, all children's expressed needs and desires are taken into account. The children are encouraged to take part in their own healthcare by speaking up during medical visits and when they notice discomfort or something concerning in their own bodies. Children are given opportunities to take leadership roles whenever appropriate such as cooking and managing the kitchen, helping when teams arrive, and participating in the church coffee cafe. These opportunities produce skills that will have carryover to many areas of their lives that will require self confidence and the communication skills required to advocate for themselves. Due to the home's desire to maintain and organize a food budget, children do not have frequent opportunities to participate in menu planning.

- Consider polling children on specific dietary desires.
- Continue in current strategies.



Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The facilities in this home have met all standards, ensuring security, privacy and protection for the girls. Bedrooms are either private or house more than two. Policies and procedures have been put in place to protect children and staff in the area of sexual abuse and neglect, such as clear written conduct for all staff and visitors. Public rooms have wide, open windows, and there are no spaces where two people can be alone unobserved. There are clearly defined separate spaces for men and women. The home can improve the frequency of staff training in regards to recognizing abuse and neglect. They also desire to formulate a procedure for reporting and handling suspected violations and at-risk situations.

- Seek out curriculum and schedule staff training for the next calendar year.
- Formalize and document procedures for easy reference.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

El Refugio strives to create a culture of social responsibility and preparedness for the girls that they serve. The girls participate in missions trips with visiting teams as well as by creating their own opportunities to serve the homeless, the elderly and even refugees. Several times a year they partner with the local church to build a home for a working poor family. They serve at a “Casa de Abuelos” monthly, and several times last year the girls traveled to Tijuana to serve food they had prepared for over 100 Ukrainian refugees. These acts of service create awareness and perspective for the girls. It reminds them that no matter their background or current situation, we must all take part in making the world a better place. When the girls of El Refugio embark on their own lives, experiences like these will have empowered them greatly to make an impact on the world. The home highly values cultural traditions, understanding social expectations, and intentionally teaches the girls how to progress toward adulthood. Opportunities like the ones above as well as weekly shifts at the Church coffee shop give the girls valuable life skills. The children are given age appropriate responsibilities, social opportunities outside the home, and whenever possible, appropriately included in situations that would help them understand local laws and how they affect them. Last month during a minor dispute with a neighbor, the home was summoned to defend their right to own horses within city limits. Some of the leadership was required to go before a judge and present their case. While this is a delicate situation, Randy and Sandy have included the girls in this information as much as possible as an educational tool to learn how to appropriately respond to state and local laws while also advocating for themselves. The home seeks out opportunities to foster healthy mentorship and meaningful work by participating in multigenerational service and enrichment activities with people from their faith community and visiting missions teams. As previously stated, they also commit faithfully to visiting the elderly monthly.

- Schedule training for staff.
- Continue current strategies.



Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

El Refugio excels in promoting the dignity and freedom of the children they serve. The girls are given autonomy and are encouraged to take care of their own bodies, personal items, and space. Whenever possible, children are encouraged to do extra chores or meaningful work within the home or community. In the past, the home has participated in several small businesses that benefited the girls such as a jewelry store in Ensenada, an onsite coffee shop and informal nail salon. At this time due to scheduling restraints, the only opportunity the girls have to work outside the home is in the coffee shop at their church. Several of the girls participate in making and serving specialty coffee each Sunday. The girls also participate in kickboxing weekly. This sport allows the girls to explore their own strength and right to defend themselves. It also fosters a deep sense of self confidence that enhances their sense of self worth.

- Continue with current standards and strategies.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The girls of El Refugio are highly involved in their spiritual community. They attend church weekly and are often seeking out ways to practice their faith. The home is set up to encourage prayer and meditation and the girls are given frequent opportunities to practice both as they choose. They have many spots throughout the home that can be utilized as safe havens or places of solitude to read and pray. Often girls can be seen cuddling up on a couch reading the bible or simply a good book that feeds their soul. This home is a Christian home that encourages Christian holidays. So in that, the holidays and rituals practiced are those of the Christian faith.

- Continue current practices.



Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Financial tracking and accountability meets the standard of local law and their missionary oversight. They track income and expenses well, and keep good receipts. As a policy, they are required to make initial purchases from personal funds and to provide receipts before reimbursement is given. This is a policy that is quite unique but highly motivates compliance and ensures a high level of accuracy. They have external and internal financial reviews from their mission organization in Canada called CTEN (Christ to Every Nation) and have a qualified local accountant validating their books annually. They do not have a formalized annual budget or detailed plans for future projects, but have been able to produce both when requested for a particular project need. They do not reconcile bank accounts monthly. This may have its own unique challenges, but the reimbursement policy that is expected of them does ensure that they are never in debt or overspend their budget.

- Consider if monthly reconciliation of accounts is necessary to provide improved accountability.
- Continue providing detailed proposed budgets as needed for potential projects.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

This home has quality policy and procedures that ensure a high standard in all areas such as staffing, governmental requirements, leadership, organization, and standardized practices for all employees. Frequency of staff training can be improved, and they desire to prioritize putting policies on paper this year as evidence of their excellent daily practices.

- Seek out staff training.
- Better organize employee files.



Current Improvement Partners



Baja Love Outreach

Baja Love Outreach is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the living conditions of impoverished communities in Baja California, Mexico. They focus on building affordable housing, distributing food and clothing, and providing educational and community development programs. Additionally, they organize medical and dental brigades to address the health needs of these populations. This initiative is based on volunteer work and donations from individuals and companies committed to the cause. Their impact has been significant, improving the quality of life for thousands of families in the region.



Commission to Every Nation

Commission to Every Nation is an evangelical Christian missionary organization whose main goal is to spread the gospel worldwide and establish local churches. They are dedicated to training and sending missionaries to different countries, providing logistical and financial support for these efforts. Additionally, they work closely with local and indigenous churches, providing resources and teaching materials in various languages. This organization also gets involved in humanitarian aid and community development programs in the regions where it operates. With a presence in over 100 countries, Christ to Every Nation focuses on reaching those who have not yet been exposed to the Christian message.

Several churches who make yearly visits and support monthly or in large projects

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



 Commission
TO EVERY NATION

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A CHILD'S
HOPE
FOUNDATION