

# Rancho La Hermosa

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Mexico



# IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

August | 2023



# Overview of this Children's Home

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## Background & Mission

Rancho La Hermosa Orphanage was born out of many years of prayer and an unwavering determination to provide excellence in care. The building of the Ranch was conducted over a period of four years, and they are one of the few fully licensed and accredited orphanages in Baja. Rancho La Hermosa continues to grow and expand with a focus on receiving more kids and changing more lives.

Rancho La Hermosa exists to love and care for orphaned and abandoned children. They are a child-centric home where distressed children can find peace, comfort, and stability. They aim to provide a healing environment where kids can learn to thrive. They focus on spiritual and physical health as well as education, nutrition, and equipping our kids for a productive life.

Rancho La Hermosa is a beautiful blend of Mexican and American leadership, with an amazing team dedicated to the health and well-being of the kids. They intentionally raise kids in smaller dorm groups with loving dorm parents. Each dorm has parents committed to providing stability and a nurturing environment necessary for formative healing and growth.

## Recent Accomplishments

- They completed the Tiny Housing for Volunteers
- They are able to provide more hours of individual and group therapy sessions for the children during the week.

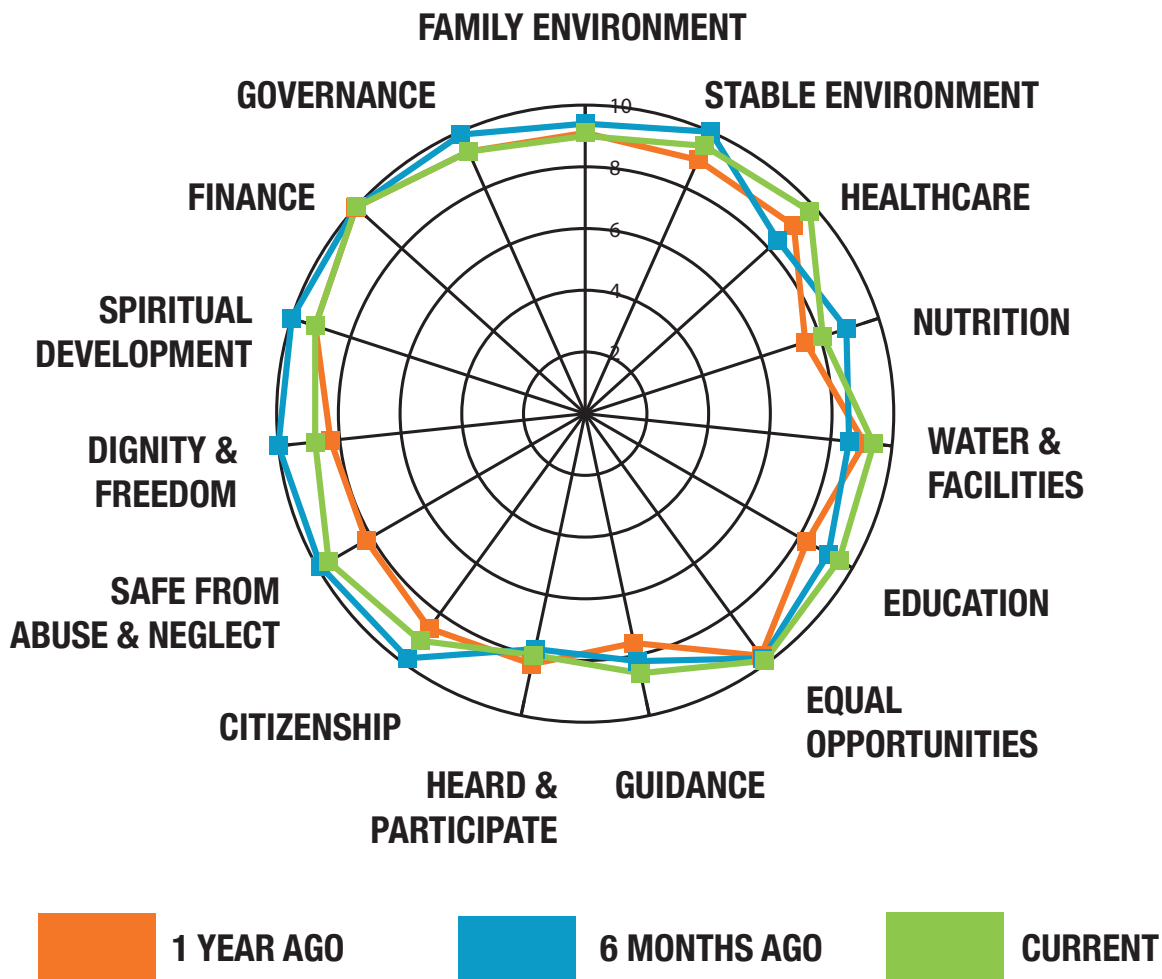


# The Thrive Assessment

## 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

## DIG THE SEPTIC TANK AND WATER CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	This project will serve the new mentoring home. The mentoring home will provide support to children, both from Hermosa and other children's homes, after they have reached 18 years of age. The purpose is to be able to mentor the kids on how to be self-sufficient and to learn life skills before they transition out of their orphanage lifestyle.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$7,500 USD

## SUN SHADE COVER

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	A sun shade to cover the patio area outside of the kitchen is needed because summers tend to get very hot for the kids. Also, if they are able to install this cover they will have more dining area outside of the kitchen and the kids will be more comfortable and protected from the sun.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$8,000 USD

## ONE-FOOT DEEP FOUNTAIN/POOL

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	Some time by next summer the home would love to have a one-foot deep fountain/pool for the kids to cool off in the heat. They envision a 14-foot round, 1-foot high fountain with water spraying out of the top. This project will help the kids to deal in a better way with the heat during summer. Because of the location of this orphanage and how high on the hill they are, the kids are more exposed to high temperatures and less chances to cool down.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$4,000USD



## Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. The kids' dorms usually have 5 to 7 kids per room, which guarantees individualized attention by their primary caregivers. The children's home promotes family visits and these occur in the church where they congregate, but only with the family relatives that apply for it and that DIF authorizes. Sibling groups play, eat and have unstructured time to spend together daily to reinforce their bonds. Although the home has improved in maintaining stable and committed caretakers, they are still in need of more caregiving staff if the orphanage receives more kids. The staff members have received training on trauma informed care, however, not 100% of their personnel attended the sessions with ESPERE. The home has an established caregiver plan for onboarding, training, and evaluating caregivers, but it is not being implemented with all the caregivers. Their onsite therapist will continue working with evaluating the staff members at least quarterly. Pastor Aleyda, co-founder of the children's home, Lady and caregiver Maria also participate in the onboarding process for new incoming caregivers.

- Ensure that 100% of the current staff members, and newcomers, attend the trauma informed care training sessions
- Have a person on the team dedicated to identifying possibilities and facilitating family reunification processes
- Establish caregivers onboarding training and evaluating caregivers



## Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The children's home is at the Thriving level in this category. Depending on the children's age is the type of consequence for an infraction that is applied, but always positive-discipline based. For example, with the younger kids, the caregivers will limit privileges like participating in certain activities such as a piñata or watching movies with the rest of the kids. For the older kids, the revoked privileges are things such as snacks or outings with everyone. Children in the home are always called by their preferred name and never by any degrading nicknames. With children that share names, they always find a respectful way of calling their attention in a way that isn't confusing to know which child they are referring to. On Saturdays, the staff works with the home's psychologist to receive support and discuss situations they might need help in in their daily task of caring for children. The psychologist works with Aleyda and Maria, one of the caregivers who's worked at the home the longest, to reinforce and provide coaching tips for the rest of the caregivers. The staff turnover rate has improved and that has naturally made the dorms more stable.

- Create and implement a strategy that allows caregivers to participate in discussions, at least once a month, about how to create a good environment and incorporate family values.



## Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. Children received annual medical and dental checkups in the last 3 months. As a general rule, all children in the home have been vaccinated, except for those cases where the kids' information needs to be obtained first to ensure the status of their vaccination records. The home has identified a local doctor for medical situations that don't pose a threat for the children. For more major incidents or medical emergencies, they turn to a hospital in Rosarito. Less than half of the children have received vision exams during the year according to the priority needs. The dorm parents are very good about reminding and supervising the kids when it comes to brushing their teeth. All of the kids have a medical record on file and DIF always pays close attention to these when they come onsite to inspect the home and children. The home currently has one child who's in the process of receiving speech therapy and one other child who has a pressing need for an orthodontic treatment; there is a plan in place to treat both children. Rancho la Hermosa has been struggling with special needs medication; they have at least 8 kids that need psychiatric medication and DIF has not been providing it or the funds that amount to around \$850 USD per month. The teen girls in the home have sufficient feminine hygiene products and they have received training by Maria on how to properly dispose of these products.

- It is that the kids with great need receive orthodontic treatment
- It is recommended that 100% of the children receive annual vision exams
- Find a strategy to bring in \$850 USD per month for the 8 children who need psychiatric medication



## Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category, Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Sustaining level. The children in the home receive the proper amount of caloric intake each day. The cook creates the weekly menus and Aleyda reviews it for approval, but they do not have any support from a nutritionist that ensures the children are receiving appropriate nutrition daily. There is a fruit basket in the kitchen where the kids can grab a fruit whenever they would like; this ensures that the kids get their daily serving of fruits. Their meals are prepared in a hygienic and very tasty manner, but they need to reinforce the annual training on food safety and preparation. The home relies on the support of a fumigation service and other strategies to rid their kitchens, pantries and food storage areas free of pests. Because the home is located in the hills, it could be quite difficult to keep the home free of pests 100% of the time but that is why they are extra aware and continuously fumigating.

- Have the support of a nutritionist to ensure the children are receiving appropriate nutrients daily
- It is highly encouraged that the cooks receive training annually on food safety and preparation



# Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. The staff of the home goes into town to fill 5 liter water jugs to have drinking water available for the kids in the dorms, classrooms and kitchen. The home has a water storage system where they added 4 huge water containers; 3 are connected to water pumps ready for fire suppression and one is left in the case that they might need it. The staff has been trained in the importance of water and safety for use. They have somebody that is in charge of the maintenance, to address the ongoing needs of the home, but they need a qualified person that can also attend to the preventive needs. The home keeps a written maintenance list to plan for the year and this gets shared not only with their maintenance person but also with volunteer groups who visit the home and may have the opportunity to address some of the repairs/projects on the list. One of the challenges the leadership staff is facing at the moment is educating and encouraging the caregivers to openly notify the director when something is broken or needs fixing; they currently need repairs in their showers and faucets. The home has their civil protection plan created and in place and they are in the process of receiving the annual trainings for their staff. The home runs on solar energy, therefore they resort to using their power generators whenever there is cloudy weather and the solar panels are not providing enough power. The batteries in these panels must be replaced every 5 years, however, not all batteries have been changed at once and they have found themselves constantly replacing those.

- Have an alternative power source in case of outage.
- Address the sink and shower heads maintenance needs.
- Have reliable, skilled maintenance support available to address the ongoing and preventive needs at the home.



## Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. Their internet has improved and has not given them major problems. Only the older children are able to use the internet and they are working on strategies so that younger children can also have access. There are 5 tutors providing support to the children. There are children who need tutoring to reach their appropriate level of reading and writing, and with the tutors they have a plan to improve in these areas. Children who are not of school age participate with the tutors in activities of the other children and there they carry out activities according to their abilities, talents and interest. The construction and equipment of the library is almost finished. All they need now is to have more books according to the age and language of the kids and they will also need a person that will run the place to ensure the kids are making good use of the time, place and books in there. The home has a plan to provide a space where they will be able to monitor young adults of school and work age, for their stay after their time at the children's home. This includes plans for continuing their education, training for work and developing skills for independent living. For this project they need to dig a septic tank and create a water container system as the next step.

- Have the library running and equipped
- Dig the septic tank and water containment system for the transition program housing for adult life

## Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. Children have a dedicated space for their personal items like photos, letters, belongings, art and much more. Children with disabilities also have everything the rest have, including reasonable accommodations, access to therapy, tutoring, mentorship and ongoing follow-up, but they need to find available resources to help the children with learning disabilities. Children who are overweight or underweight are constantly monitored with special dietary adaptations based on their needs. For children who need glasses or other similar needs, efforts are made to provide them with necessary items or accessories. All children have the same opportunities for their education. The children have extracurricular classes like soccer, English classes, guitar classes and more. The adults in the home act as quality mentors for the children. Plans for transition to adult life are under construction, as is the new building

- Among the teachers, psychologists and tutors find available resources to help children with learning disabilities.





## Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. The children's home has a job description for the search for its caregivers. The children have a therapist who they can see individually on a monthly basis, and also other therapeutic strategies to help them to heal. There is a complete team that monitors the interactions between children and adults with the strategy of identifying whether or not they are trustworthy and quality people to interact with children. There is also a group that is ready to instruct boys and girls about the changes associated with puberty and adolescence, being coached by the pastor's wife and Aleyda. Education on sexuality issues are initially addressed by the house parents and hand-in-hand with the other adults in their support network, which makes this process very healthy for children. The staff has been trained on topics of reinforcement of good behaviors and modeling of the same, and they actively participate in the therapy program with ESPERE Therapeutic Community. Once the transition program for young people over 15 years of age is implemented, there will be a written plan for education and work after their stay in the home. This plan will expose the children to different work fields, career and educational opportunities in order to expand their interests and prepare them for their future. They have a very organic program of opportunities for adolescents. Although they are very aware that they will have one and they will stick to this plan, it is not ready yet.

- Create a plan to expose the children to different work fields, career and educational opportunities in order to expand their interests and prepare them for their future.
- Continuing with the project of the transition home for kids 15+



## Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at a Sustaining level in this category. Children can decide what to do in their free time as long as it is allowed by the house rules. Children can decide how to dress each day. They have a visible menu in the dining room so that children know what they will eat, but they do not participate as much in the creation of these menus. There are no written development plans for most of the children. However, the orphanage leaders will soon start with the planning for the transition home program where they will provide different opportunities for skills development and training for self-sufficiency along with the individual development plans. The orphanage allows the children to have leadership actions and there are initiatives of children's committees, however this needs more structure, trainings to facilitate the sessions and follow-ups.

- Create and implement individual development plans.
- Implement more activities where the children can have leadership roles.



## Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. There are still birth certificates pending for some children. However, obtaining them depends on DIF in their own processes. Regarding the children being taught restitution, the consequences of breaking rules depend on the action. Ricardo is the mentor who implements the consequences for wrongdoing, generally assigning additional chores or tasks around the home, such as washing the dishes or cleaning. Children have daily and weekly responsibilities that they must attend to, which are assigned according to age. They are taught organically about citizenship, which is part of the culture of the home. With the support of the mentors, too, they address some of the children's questions. Mentors Ricardo, Maria and Aleyda are in charge of teaching the kids life skills, although these mentors are aware that they can improve in this area. The children participate in community support activities such as distributing groceries to poor families or individuals in the community. Children also have the opportunity to attend school events in the company of their assigned caregivers, mentors or other significant adults who can chaperone.

- Continue the follow ups with DIF in order to obtain the pending birth certificates.
- Continue implementing the mentoring program to develop skills for independent living.



## Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. The facilities at this home are safe. Some staff members have been trained on positive discipline techniques, but not 100% of them. There is a child protection policy in place which has been shared at least verbally with all staff and volunteers, but they also need to improve it by having a way to check the background of the staff and visitors. Regarding discipline, caregivers do not spank or pull arms, and children are not scolded in public. While children do not generally work for wages, a girl is saving money to help pay for her braces, but it does not violate local laws. The home is helping match her efforts financially as a strategy to motivate her to work for what she wants. There are authorized personnel to accompany the children when they leave the home. Whenever a new child is received, the house parents meet with the psychologist to discuss their observations of behavior or challenges within a week of arrival. Caregivers also meet with the psychologist every week.

- Ensure that all staff and directors receive annual training on positive discipline techniques and alternatives to corporal punishment
- Reinforce the visitors policy and process for checking the background of staff and frequent visitors



## Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. Boys and girls have access to their own beds. They have enough underwear, towels, and clean sheets for each child. The directors and caregivers encourage the children to respect themselves and live together lovingly and harmoniously. As for work opportunities, there is a girl who has a way of earning a little money by doing extra tasks around the home. She's able to keep the money and she saves it to spend it on whatever she decides.

- Begin implementing the Individual Development Plans or a similar strategy for the development of life skills and independent life.



## Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. The home has religious materials such as books, bibles, and music available and easily accessible to children. The children belong to and are very close to their religious community, which also provides a lot of support and mentoring to the kids. They actively participate in their church community activities. Many of the girls participate in a dance group, services and other activities at church too. This is one of the opportunities they get to practice their spiritual learning and also strengthen their bonds of faith. The children have appropriate spaces to pray or meditate at the home. They also always thank God for their meals and blessings, inside and outside the orphanage. These practices have been instilled in the children since their integration into the home.

- Maintain good practice of the strategies already implemented in this area



## Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. This home controls and manages finances on both sides of the border, Mexico and US. They have a budget associated with expenses, allowing them to monitor if they are above or below their budget. As a director, Aleyda prepares a monthly report for Dave to review and analyze the movement of funds. Generally, they stick to their annual budget with only a marginal difference of 10-15% per year, thus proving the budget very useful. Once they are able to perform their expense analysis, the directors establish rules or strategies to stay within the budget. The home has a good workload distribution among the staff since they have job descriptions. When a team member is not carrying out their responsibilities, they use the job description as the basis for providing feedback. Regarding the planning of their budget for projects greater than \$25,000 dollars, they have established two separate budgets: one for expenses regarding the children and one for construction expenses. This is the way they can be held accountable for the use of these funds since their donors contribute to specific expenses, and separate budgets allow them to send expense accurate reports back. If they need to take money from the general budget, they notify and ask their donors for permission to use the money for something other than the purpose of the donation.

- Maintain the best practices already being implemented in this category



## Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. Improvements to the home and the land are in the name of their association, so they cannot be used for another purpose. The home has an organizational chart that describes the functions and roles of all staff. The leadership of the home holds frequent meetings with their team to discuss areas of opportunity and process improvements. Additionally, they adhere 100% to each position's job description, implement feedback spaces for collaborators if they need to comply with their assignments, and use this same document as the basis of its review and evaluation of staff performance. The home does not utilize employment contracts. However, there is a personal verbal agreement with each staff member regarding their function and benefits. The home must renew its operating license, with all its updated training and certifications.

- Renew civil protection training for staff
- Renew the necessary certifications for the civil protection file
- Renew the operating license



# Current Improvement Partners



## Books, Library Reading (BLR)

BLR helps kids love to read. They do this through getting books that match their interests, expand their interests and spark their curiosity. They also develop reading goals, activities and training for kids and orphanage staff.



## Espere

Espere partners with ACHF to provide caregiver support through trainings, workshops, and roundtables on ways to support the well-being of the children. Additionally, they offer support to therapists working in our partner orphanages.



## One Generation Alliance

One Generation Alliance's purpose is to facilitate helping orphans by gathering and directing people. They hope to increase the quality of life for orphans.

For a list of projects and opportunities to coordinate on go to  
[www.ACHF.org/Projects](http://www.ACHF.org/Projects)



A CHILD'S  
**HOPE**  
FOUNDATION