

Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer

Mexico



IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

October | 2023

Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer is an institution connected to the Casa Hogar network in Tijuana, Mexico, that provides safe and stable housing for displaced, orphaned, and abandoned children. Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer is home to more than 30 children between 8 and 21 years of age. It was founded and currently led by Pastor Freddy and Eva Duarte, a couple originally from Guatemala, who started the house in 2002 when they were invited to take care of 18 children living in a nearby orphanage that had to close its doors. There was such a need for care, love, and attention for these 18 children that this is how Eva and Freddy looked for all possible alternatives to help them. So they decide, and by God's call, to leave their home in Los Angeles, California, to move to Tijuana and undertake their mission.

At home at Eben-Ezer, every child is part of a big family. Older children teach the little ones how to fold their clothes, do their chores, prepare for school, and do homework. For the past 19 years, 210 children without parents have been part of Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer. Eva and Freddy have provided the same parenting style to all their children, where love for God, honesty, and responsibility are the main values of their big family.

Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer is an institution with moral and spiritual values whose mission is to support children and adolescents in stages of vulnerability. Its vision is to provide children and adolescents with the necessary tools so that they have a decent education to face future challenges.

Here, every child is cared for with quality and warmth in all areas of his development, and the work that is done is not to seek the pleasure of the government or visitors but is to the pleasure of God. Every child is treated with respect, and their weaknesses and talents are recognized, which helps children have the necessary care so that they can improve and heal.

Recent Accomplishments

- With the support of our donor friends, Casa Hogar Eben Ezer has a water cistern that in addition to providing water in case of a fire emergency, it also provides water on a regular basis to the home in case of a water cut, and therefore the children never suffer from a lack of water.
- In August, two more young women entered the university. One of them is studying administration and the other is studying engineering.



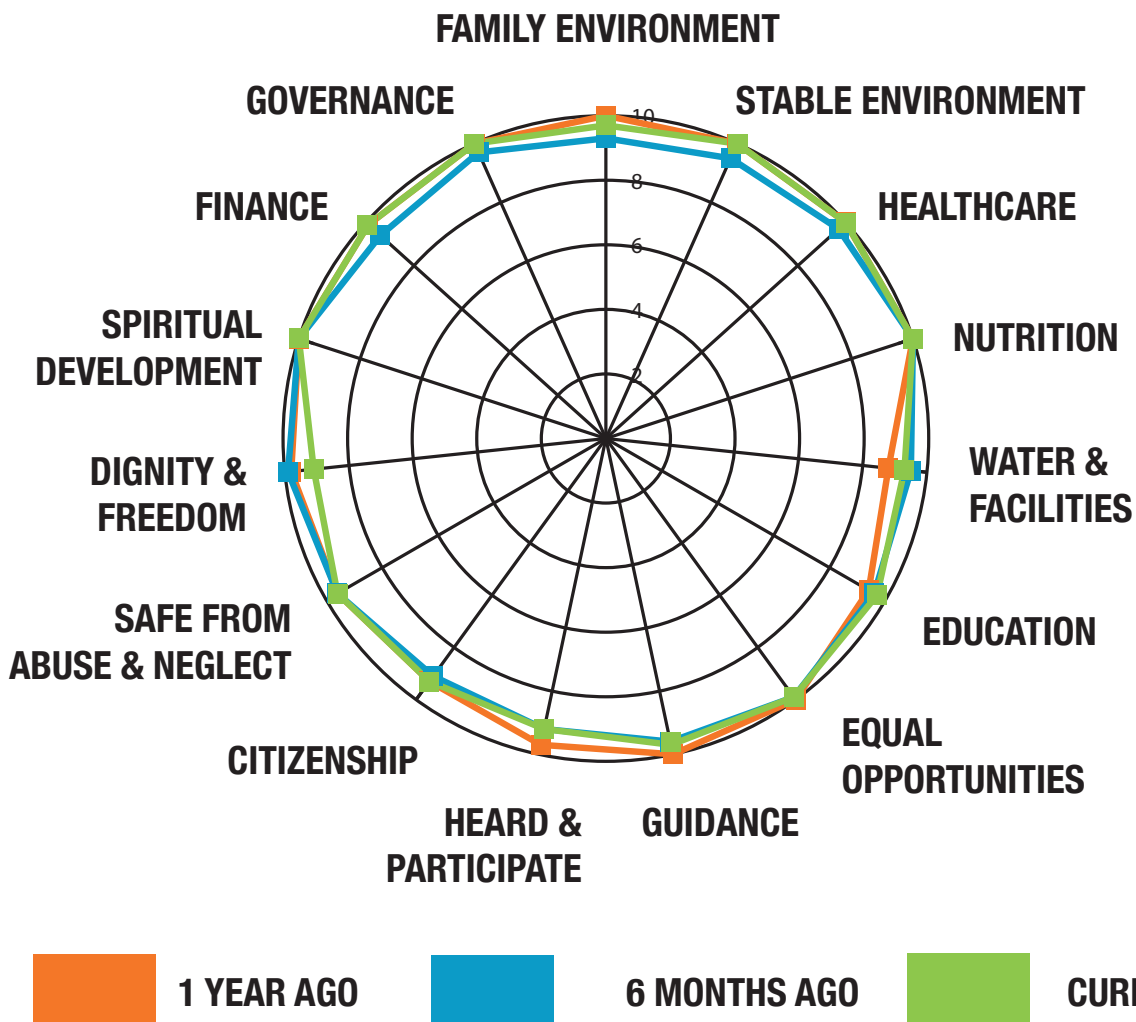


The Thrive Assessment

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

RENEWING SHOWER FLOORS

PROJECT SUMMARY	The Casa Hogar needs to renew the children's showers since the current floor is made of plastic tubs. These are very old and are causing leaks and cracks that lead to humidity problems. For this project, it will be necessary to remove the plastic tubs and replace them with concrete and tile floors, which will make them more durable.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$63,700 MXN \$4,000 USD

DIESEL POWER GENERATOR

PROJECT SUMMARY	It is necessary to have an alternate source of electricity, in case of a power outage or blackout, to avoid any impact on the preservation of food and the safety of the Casa Hogar.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$50,950 MXN \$3,200 USD

VARNISH RENOVATION ON KITCHEN CABINETS

PROJECT SUMMARY	It is necessary to replace the urinals in the children's bathrooms because the current ones do not work properly, and one is broken.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$55,800 MXN \$3,500 USD



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Eva and Freddy have a property in Los Angeles that they rent and use that income on a monthly basis to pay for some of the Casa Hogar's expenses. They are planning to build a couple of apartments in the backyard of their home in Los Angeles to have a space for them when they visit, have medical appointments or just go for a break. With these apartments they are looking to generate more income to support their personal expenses and to support the expenses of the Casa Hogar. In addition, Eva has decided to start with her transition plan for the Casa Hogar where she will hand over the management to Elizabeth, who has been by her side in the administration of the Casa Hogar for more than 5 years and who also grew up in that same Casa Hogar.

This plan is intended to be carried out over the next year. In this regard, Eva will be focused on finishing Elizabeth's training. Eva will always remain working alongside Elizabeth to support her in taking the position.

- Assign staff to follow up on the visits and family processes of the children



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a thriving level in this category. The house rules are appropriate for each age range; they are consistent and clearly explained to the children. The rules are creatively displayed on posters and drawings inside the home in case anyone forgets. Consequences for rule infractions are based on positive discipline, putting into practice the training that caregivers have received. The team of caregivers and director have met monthly with specialists to discuss behavioral ideas that help to effectively teach and discipline the children in their care. They maintain close communication with the psychologists to continue learning and implementing better care strategies. The family groups eat, work and play together, as long as there are no risks in doing so. Caregivers have received guidance on how to create a more stable, loving and nurturing environment in their Casa Hogar. These teachings are practiced on an ongoing basis at the home. As much as possible, the caregivers participate in joint activities and play with the children on a daily basis. This either occurs inside the Casa Hogar with board games and educational activities or outside the home as field trips or special outings. The children are called by their preferred name and never by denigrating nicknames by caregivers, staff or other children. When any incident has occurred, it is corrected immediately. Eva and Freddy have taken special care to ensure that their employees receive 1-2 days off per week to prevent burnout and they as directors also leave the Casa Hogar at least once a week, leaving Elizabeth in charge of the leadership of the home. The home has traditions and activities that they all do together on a weekly or monthly basis such as celebrating birthdays, movie nights, religious service days and special events. One of their favorite celebrations is Thanksgiving, when they invite their friends and neighbors to share a meal with them and it becomes a big party. The boys and girls enjoy being hosts in their home and always make all visitors feel welcome. They love very much, with their treatment and attention, to make the visitors feel that they are also part of their big family.

Maintaining good practices in this category



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thriving level. All of the children have received annual health, eye and dental check-ups and examinations, and their medical needs have been taken care of. In general, the children are in good health, and in special cases, such as a girl who has nephrotic syndrome, medical and nutritional follow-up visits are made on a monthly basis. The home has a fund for medical emergencies and is available when needed. However, for their daily needs they turn to their donor friends to cover these expenses. Recently they had a medication crisis for special psychiatric follow-up cases. Fortunately, they were able to resolve it with the support of their local donors and the support of DIF. Three children who have required psychiatric consultations have attended. This has not generated any cost for the home.

All children have received and have the corresponding documentation for their vaccinations and the appointments for influenza vaccinations have been scheduled for the change of season. Appropriate measures, training and treatment plans have been implemented for children with special conditions. Support has been sought from local institutions and centers for the care and evaluation of children with behavioral problems and disability. Soap and water are hygienically available near all dining areas and toilets. Children know and implement hand washing techniques on a daily basis. Children are checked weekly and monthly for head lice and provided with appropriate treatment if any are detected. In more severe cases, specialists have been called in for this care. Currently they have identified a couple of children who will need orthodontic treatment. In these cases they have begun the prep work needed prior to the placement of the braces. Thus, in a couple of months the children will receive the complete treatment. Children brush their teeth at least three times a day. In general they maintain good oral health. The Casa Hogar has also identified a pediatrician and a hospital in case of an emergency. A fully stocked and equipped first aid kit is available at the home to care for all the children in case of an emergency. Adolescent girls have been taught about their menstrual cycles: what to expect, how to take care of themselves, how to use and dispose of products correctly. They also have access to sufficient quantities of the necessary hygiene products and know the proper disposal methods of these. Finally, all children have a medical record and it is updated with all relevant information on their health status.

Maintain good practices in this category



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

At Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer they are thriving in this category. The children receive an adequate amount of calories per day. They are also given some form of protein in their meals, which are very appetizing and tasty. Their meals are from a variety of recipes, so the children never show or express boredom with what they eat. The children receive 2-3 servings of fruits and 2-3 servings of vegetables daily. If they don't have them at the moment, they always have creative ways to solve it by making ice cream, or some other kind of snack that the children enjoy very much. The food is prepared in a hygienic and healthy way. The cook is trained annually in food safety and preparation. She always makes sure her kitchen is clean before and after serving food. They have received help from a nutritionist to verify that the children are getting enough nutrients daily and special menus are implemented for children with special dietary needs. The kitchen and food storage areas are free of toxic substances. These areas are well ventilated and free of pests. The home has a pest control plan in place and keeps its food storage areas tidy and stocked with food at all times. One of the needs in this area is the maintenance of its furniture and cupboards in the kitchen. For this, it is necessary to adjust doors and drawer rails, as well as paint or varnish the furniture for greater durability and to improve its aesthetics.

Varnish and fix kitchen furniture, doors and rails



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at the Thriving level. Its facilities have been inspected by a qualified person. The safety of the home has been evaluated in the last year, in addition to the fact that it has all the safety reports and approvals required by local law. Qualified and reliable maintenance support is available to meet the ongoing and preventive needs of the facilities. The Casa Hogar has a written annual plan to address property maintenance. Most of the needs have been addressed during the past year, however, a recurring need is to replace some structures and equipment that are more than 15 years old. For example, today there is a great need to change the old showers that were built with a plastic tub. With time and use, they have developed leaks and humidity problems. That is why Freddy expresses that they have made the decision to replace the tubs with concrete and tile floors, which will help them to avoid water leaks that could damage other areas of the home. The Casa Hogar has safe drinking water and is free of chemicals, bacteria or decaying pipes. Safety issues have been addressed and the facility is safe and able to withstand the elements. However, the perimeter wall still needs to be built to prevent unauthorized people from entering or crossing into the property.

The children have easy access to water and it is available for them to drink at any time. There is also a cistern for drinking water; this is also a backup in case of fire. Thanks to this, today they do not suffer from water shortages when there are massive water cuts in the city. The electrical infrastructure is sufficient for their electrical needs and they are safely connected, however, they do not have an alternative source of energy in case of power outages. This creates a risk for preserving their food items stored in refrigerators and freezers. The faucets in the sinks and shower heads in the children's dormitories are in good condition. In the last 6 months some parts that were no longer working or broken have been replaced as part of the maintenance of the home. There is an emergency plan in case of fire, flood, loss of water, loss of electricity and it is reviewed and approved by the local authorities.

- Replace plastic tubs in children's showers with concrete and tile floors
- Have a power generator for refrigerators and freezers in case of a power outage
- Construction of perimeter wall around the property



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thriving level in this category. All children are enrolled in school and attend classes 80% or more of the time. Activities are implemented with the children who are not of school age so that they practice their skills and talents. Each child has access to a personalized and undistracted tutoring session at least once a week. There they receive homework support and tutors are able to address questions arising from their classes. There is a library space with more than 75 books according to age, language and reading levels. All of the children have access to these on a regular basis. The home has access to computers and the internet and the children receive classes on how to use basic computer programs or make information inquiries. The children are able to identify and articulate the sound of each letter of the alphabet, read and write within their level. In addition, for those who have not yet reached the expected academic level, there is a plan to support them in improving their reading. For children who are more behind in school, the home has implemented evaluations and care strategies with an organization that specializes in these types of situations. There is funding and housing available for the children to pursue additional education after their time at the Casa Hogar. The school-aged children have supplies, toys and art materials according to their developmental needs. Recently, they have stocked up to have even more variety.

Eva, Elizabeth and Minerva analyze grades and progress every three months at a minimum. Also, when report cards are available, they seek strategies to support the children in their areas of greatest need and seek local help where they cannot meet the needs. Qualified assessments have been used to identify children with learning disabilities and strategies have been implemented to address these needs including tutoring, therapy and job training. Children are read to using age-appropriate reading techniques. Finally, reading time is provided to older children at least once a week.

- Implement support strategies with extra tutoring for children to improve their reading and mathematical thinking skills

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a thriving level in this category. The children have a designated space for their personal items such as letters, photos, gifts, toys, an item of sentimental value, as well as clothing and shoes. Time has been scheduled for the children to participate in extracurricular activities several times a month such as music and singing lessons, baking and pastry courses, among others. Resources and skills have been identified to accommodate physical disabilities. Efforts are made to provide special adaptations such as the purchase of glasses for those children who require them or the adaptation of meals for children with special dietary needs due to health conditions. Children are given equal opportunities to develop their education. They are supported and encouraged to maintain and continue with their education, technical training or to learn a trade that in the future will support them in becoming self-sufficient, respecting their interests and talents. Eva and Freddy provide all the facilities for young people to build their life plan or transition to adulthood. The two of them accompany and advise the young adults in some important decisions, offering the same opportunities regardless of gender, disability or family background, to help them move on to independent living. However, these plans are only created for those over 18 years of age who still live in the Casa Hogar. Adult male and female mentors act as role models and are available to guide the children. They are always available to address the children's questions and needs.

- Implement hope plans or similar strategies for children 13 years of age and older.
- Follow up and update the life plans of young people over 18 years of age.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at the Thriving level in this category. The home has a profile or job description for when they are looking for new caregivers. The children have the opportunity to see a therapist on a weekly or monthly basis. This is done individually or in a group that helps them work through some conflict or situations of concern. The children are taught to be respectful of each other and to respect others. Caregivers are evaluated to determine if they are quality mentors for the children and have 1-on-1 meetings with Eva to strengthen strategies. Adolescents over the age of 15 have received aptitude testing and career counseling to determine their academic abilities and long-term educational goals as well as to decide what career or trade they want to learn. In addition, there is constant communication with the young trainees. Support is provided to adolescents enrolled in technical careers and/or university careers. Eva is the trusted person who analyzes and discusses the changes associated with puberty with the adolescents and prepares them well in advance, mainly with the girls. Eva talks a lot with them about the importance of personal hygiene and the care required during their menstrual cycle. All adolescents over the age of 13 have received education related to responsible sexual behavior. Teens over 15, together with Eva, the psychologist and the mentors make and discuss a plan for their education or work after their time at the Casa Hogar. In almost all cases, these plans are kept in writing and sent to DIF for their knowledge. However, this is only for young adults over the age of 18. Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer conducts training on independent living skills such as making grocery lists or servicing cars. However, they do not have a documented life skills program where children can participate or that reflects their interests on a regular basis. Caregivers have received trainings on an annual basis on how to model, teach and reinforce skills and behaviors with the children. They have been trained in trauma care by ESPERE, a program that they have received with great pleasure and high expectations for their performance as caregivers. Also, psychologist Carolina from the home, constantly provides them with advice on strategies for dealing with difficult cases, in addition to requesting support from other specialists such as the psychiatrist to support the stability of the children as much as possible.

- Have a strategy to expose adolescents over the age of 15 to different employment, professional and educational opportunities to broaden their interests and prepare them for their future.
- Have a documented independent living skills program



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thriving level in this category. The children can decide what they want to do in their free time if it is within the rules and limits established by the children's home and does not affect or disrupt the other children's activities. The children are allowed to participate in the planning of the menu, incorporating their tastes and preferences, at least twice a month and always on special events and birthdays. This menu is always visible for the children to see. Eva and Freddy have implemented a series of very organic actions for the children and youth to learn about independent living activities and skills. However they have not done the implementation of child hope plans or a similar strategy that would support them in planning the next steps for the youth in their life after the Casa Hogar. The children have the option to choose their clothing on a daily basis. The home provides activities for the children in the hopes of promoting leadership amongst them, such as organizing Thursday services, participating in activities to support the spiritual community to which they belong and in community outreach near the home. The children's committees meet regularly and organize these activities. Children and caregivers receive information about medical care procedures. They are given the opportunity to ask questions prior to their administration in order to avoid a possible traumatic situation for the children.

- Implement the child's hope plans or similar strategy
- Seek strategies for the active participation of children's committees



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

At Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer they are at a Thriving level in this category. Almost all of the children have their birth certificates, except for three of them who are still in the process of being registered, which is in the hands of DIF. The children have responsibilities such as age-appropriate chores, which they must perform on a daily basis like making their beds, helping with the cleaning and tidying up of the Casa Hogar, helping to serve the food and arranging tables and chairs for the meals. The children are taught about ethics and the democratic process. These strategies are implemented when there is a decision to be made regarding family activities. The children are taught to repair the damages committed with the objective of developing a sense of responsibility and citizenship in them. National and local holidays are observed at the home. Their favorite holidays are Christmas, Thanksgiving and summer vacation. Teenagers over the age of 15 have a mentor who teaches them life skills such as how to create an errand list and go shopping, how to order their food in a restaurant, how to pay for items, how to manage and budget, and combines it with some singing and music lessons. The Casa Hogar is free of clutter, items such as bicycles and tools are stored in their proper places. The children participate in community service activities at least twice a year and actively participate when they have something to share such as groceries, food and other products. The children have the opportunity to attend school trips and special events outside of the home each year and when DIF grants permission, subject to local rules and regulations.

- Continue to take the necessary steps to obtain the missing birth certificates



Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben-Ezer is at the Thriving level in this category. The level of security of the home is not adequate in relation to the surrounding community since they do not have a perimeter fence or wall that divides the home from the rest of the community. They have had some incidents where intruders have entered their property and use the space behind the Casa Hogar as a shortcut to their homes. The home has private facilities for bathing, using the restroom and dressing. Dormitories are separated for boys and girls, in accordance with appropriate age groups and government regulations. Caregivers and directors have received training every six months on how to identify, prevent and avoid abuse, as well as training on positive discipline techniques and alternatives to corporal punishment. These trainings have been hand in hand between Carolina, ESPERE Therapeutic Community and other bi-annual trainings attended by DIF. Children over 5 years of age attend educational sessions on abuse and age-appropriate reporting methods at least every six months. Psychological evaluations have been conducted at entry for each child to help work through their trauma and they have the support of a psychologist for follow-up. To minimize any unprotected situations for the children inside and outside the home, appropriate staff accompany the children on outings. There is also a policy that male staff who are not caregivers are not allowed to be alone with any children, as well as a policy for visitors. The home has a process in place to check references and backgrounds of staff and frequent visitors, in accordance with local regulations. The home implements a child protection program that ensures that children are not physically, verbally, or emotionally abused by their caregivers or visitors. In addition, the program ensures that children and youth are not hired in exchange for wages or barter that violate local law or adversely affect their health, education, or established daily schedule.

- Build the perimeter fence to improve the safety of the children



Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thriving level in this category. The children bathe daily; personal hygiene is one of the best developed habits in the children of this home. Eva and Freddy have established a system of clear and simple rules. In order for the children to know them, the consequences of infractions of house rules are discussed in advance and are kept in writing in all rooms as a daily reminder of what is expected of them to live together as a family. Children have the opportunity to perform additional chores or jobs within the home to earn an allowance or privileges. This opportunity is for everyone equally. In the case of young adults, they can have activities and tasks within the home that allow them to have an economic gain. Likewise, those who have a government scholarship have the opportunity to keep the money from these two sources and do with it whatever is most important or necessary for them. The directors and staff encourage the children to be kind to each other and to correct put-downs, unkind comments and bullying. The children have bedding such as appropriate sheets and blankets that are cleaned every two weeks or when they become soiled. However, this task is not easy as they do not have the proper laundry equipment for this big task. Eva mainly goes every two weeks to the United States to a laundromat to wash all the clothes because the home's washing machine cannot do all the work. That is why they need at least two new pieces of equipment working at 100% to cover this need. The children have access to their own bed, mattress to sleep on and their own toothbrush. Also each child has sufficient clothing, underwear, and a clean towel for personal use. Age-appropriate toys and art materials are available for all children. However, they do not have an appropriate play area for all ages, as they only have a multi-purpose area that cannot be used simultaneously. The home has registered safety protocols and training in place for the children and staff, such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers that are regularly checked, and a meeting point in case of a natural disaster.

- Have a plan for construction or adaptation of the outdoor play area to make it safe and suitable for all ages
- Purchase two industrial washing machines to meet children's laundry needs
- Create a plan of alternative employment opportunities in the community for young adults that does not affect their school performance



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thriving level in this category. One of the most important values of this home is the love of God. Therefore, all children are given the opportunity to be part of a spiritual community. The children are free to participate daily in community prayer or other spiritual rituals. Also, the children organize and prepare everything necessary to conduct a religious service once a month. This service is conducted from start to finish by them, giving them the opportunity to practice their spiritual learning and share it with others. On Sundays of each week, the religious service is held inside the Casa Hogar, welcoming people from the community to be part of this celebration. There is a designated place for prayer and meditation and there are materials, spiritual and religious books accessible to all the children whenever they want to use them.

Maintaining good practices in this category



Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thriving level in this category. The Casa Hogar records its income and expenses. Freddy keeps very good records and files their receipts and creates a profit and loss statement each month. They do their audits internally and have a qualified accountant who keeps their accounts and validates their books on a monthly basis. Both Freddy and his accountant keep their records up to date and these are available for review. The Eben-Ezer Home has and carries out controls to minimize opportunities for misuse of funds. They have filed tax returns in accordance with government requirements and reconcile their bank account monthly. They have created detailed budgets and plans for their major expenses, especially for Casa Hogar's construction projects and renovations, and try to stick to their budgets even though these budgets are always changing. Freddy and Eva are constantly seeking support for their most expensive projects, always putting the most pressing needs first and inviting their donors to support their projects. The organization has an adequate division of roles and tasks for internal control where Eva and Freddy delegate to the rest of the team the activities according to the needs of the children and the Casa Hogar.

Maintaining good practices in this category



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Eben Ezer is at a Thrivingus level in this category. The property and any modifications made to it are insured. There is documentation proving that the property is for the exclusive use of the Casa Hogar, as well as future construction and modifications to the property. The same is true for the cars and vans. The new caretakers of the home are guided by Eva. When they are hired, they sign documents as collaborators detailing their functions and tasks to be performed. All employees have their own file that includes their personal documents, the continuous training they have received and other documents requested at the time of hiring. They have an organizational chart indicating the various positions and how they are distributed. Ongoing meetings are held with staff to discuss issues of interest on a regular basis and when necessary. Staff have been instructed or received various trainings on the characteristics and values of a family, the creation of a family in a Casa Hogar environment, the importance and practical ways to facilitate child participation, as well as other trainings relevant to their work and others more focused on their personal development. They have also received training on CPR, first aid, as well as the care and treatment of a sick child. Staff have an established vacation policy as well as the required rest days to prevent job burnout. In terms of licenses and permits, the Casa Hogar complied with all the protocols, guidelines, supervisions and documents necessary for its state operating license, which was recently issued.

- Maintain the strategies implemented to improve its practices in this category



Current Improvement Partners



Esperere

Esperere 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.



saprea

Saprea

Partnership that works with 10 plus orphanages in Baja California. Their focus is food, education, staff salaries & some small construction projects. They have a program that supports kids from orphanages get an apartment and go to a university. They host a big gala and do day trips to try and raise funds.



corazón de vida

Corazon de vida

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

