

Nuestra Familia

Mexico



IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

December | 2023



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

The beginnings of Nuestra Familia, officially known as Casa Hogar Maria Inmaculada A.C., date back to 1985 when it was established by Father Jose de Jesus Quezada Martinez. He opened the home as a shelter and protection for single mothers with children who had no place to live. Over the years, the home passed from Father Jose to Mother Virginia Alejandra Oropeza Baez until 2011 when Mother Virginia met with Noel Diaz, president and founder of Ministerios El Sembrador, to take over the administration and legal representation of the home. Shortly thereafter, Juan and Emma Villagran were invited by Noel Diaz to oversee the day-to-day management in 2013. Although Emma passed away in June 2022, Juan has continued to oversee Nuestra Familia under the direction of El Sembrador and the other members of his team.

Nuestra Familia's mission is to raise happy children through a Christ-centered foundation, providing them with everything they need to prepare them for a life of meaning and service. The leadership believes that all children deserve and should have the opportunity to succeed. They work hard to provide a safe environment and give these children respect, affection and great love. Our Family provides each child with a unique personal development plan that identifies areas of strength and opportunity in the academic, extracurricular, personal and spiritual spheres. Our Family hopes to eventually house about 100 children, including housing for those who have become adults but would like a place to stay temporarily while they are in school or looking for their own place.

As a charitable aid organization, its vision is guided by the hope that one day, every child who comes to Our Family will be able to live independently and contribute to society in a meaningful way. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." -Matthew 25:40

Recent Accomplishments

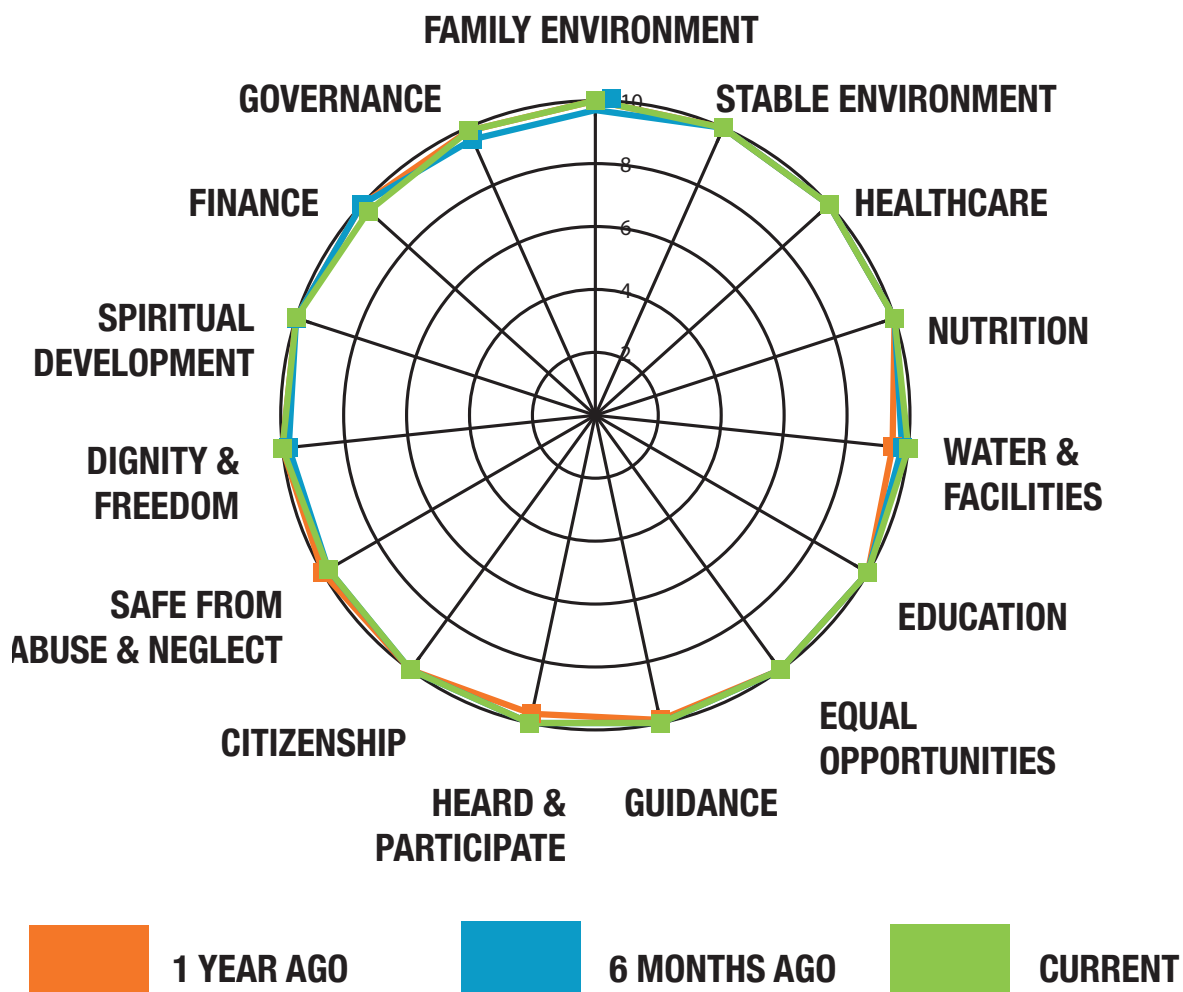
- Their civil protection plan and other safety protocols have been accepted, and now they are only waiting for the assessments for the personnel to obtain their operating license.
- The preschool area was reopened and now has 5 children from 2 to 5 years old in that area.

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

WATER TANK REPLACEMENT

PROJECT SUMMARY	Due to time of use and exposure to the elements, the water tank that supplies at least two of the children's bedrooms needs to be replaced. This water tank has been causing water leaks and although corrective maintenance has been performed, it is no longer in the best condition to continue using it to supply water to these two areas of the house.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$55,000 MXN \$3,444 USD

CONSTRUCTION OF PROTECTIVE ROOF

PROJECT SUMMARY	The drinking water container is located on top of the kitchen ceiling, and next to it is the propane tank. It is necessary to build a sunshade roof because both containers are exposed to the elements and in the case of the drinking water, this causes the water to decompose quicker. This creates a breeding ground for fungi and bacteria, which means more frequent washing and maintenance is required. In the case of the gas tank, having this roof over the tank will protect the gas distribution facilities and piping, reducing the maintenance cost of both pieces of equipment and providing quality water for the children.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$55,300 MXN \$3,465 USD

SECURITY POSTS IN PARKING LOT

PROJECT SUMMARY	For the safety of the property, children and vehicles, it is necessary to place 5 security and protection posts next to the sidewalk of the visitor parking area. Due to the increased traffic in that area, truck drivers or motorists tend to use that side of the parking lot to make U-turns or most of the time they do not respect the traffic signs or speed limit. They have already had some incidents where they crash into the home's fence causing damage to the property. The risk to the children in this area is even more latent since this is where they enter the home on their way home from school.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$13,600 MXN \$852 USD



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home encourages visits from the children's relatives and provides them with all possible facilities to do so. Currently, only a couple of children receive visits, the rest of the children do not have a family member who has officially requested visits from DIF. The children have primary caregivers. There are two areas of house parents, the rest are permanent caregivers. The idea is to have permanent staff and the same person in the same area throughout the week so that the children have that stability. The caregivers have quarterly trainings on topics such as trauma or crisis, and other topics of interest on a weekly basis. These weekly trainings have a duration of two hours and in addition to this they take training promoted by DIF. The home has documentation of integration plans for new caregivers. On weekends, at play times and on special dates, siblings are encouraged to spend time together. Caregivers are being evaluated every three months by a certified specialist on the standard of care they are providing to the children. The care staff has received continuous training on family traits and values as well as the creation of a family in an orphanage environment; these training are given together with the psychologist and the spiritual aspect with Mr. Juan. On the other hand and with the division of functions, Mrs. Martha is in charge of following up on the legal status of the children and maintaining all verbal and written communication with the DIF representatives, a practice that has given them very good results.

- Maintain best practices in this area.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

House rules are age appropriate and consistent for children and youth. Consequences for breaking rules are based on positive discipline. Consequences are age-appropriate and reason-based, such as limiting television viewing, not being allowed to go on regular walks, or not participating in any special event in the home. With the older children it is also about them fixing or repairing what they have caused or being asked to pay for the damage. In this home the children are not called by nicknames, only by their name or their own name in diminutive. The sibling groups eat, play and work together. The psychologist meets weekly with the caregivers to address situations of concern with the children or to address any emotional or behavioral situation that the children are presenting. If necessary, these meetings are more frequent. Caregivers have 1 to 2 days off once a week and an experienced caregiver who knows the children is available to cover the breaks. Caregivers participate in joint activities and play with the children every day and adapt their games to the weather conditions. The family groups have traditions such as: baking birthday cakes and decorating their space to celebrate the children's birthdays. Everyone celebrates differently according to their decisions in each of the casitas. One of the favorite celebrations amongst the children are graduations, Christmas and Quinceañeras because they are big parties with many guests, where everyone is together enjoying family and community time.

- Maintain good practices in this area.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children are taken to the Children's Hospital of the Californias or another physician for medical examinations. A pediatrician and a hospital are identified in case of an emergency. Children can see a doctor in case of an emergency. Children also brush their teeth three times a day. Children have annual eye, hearing, and dental exams. Those requiring orthodontic treatment are seen on an ongoing basis. Children's heads are checked weekly for lice. Currently there are no cases requiring treatment. Each child has a medical file with all the necessary information kept in it. The nurse updates the file constantly. All children have their immunization records and vaccinations. Hygiene supplies are available in various areas for hand washing and personal hygiene. Adolescent girls have access to hygiene products and have enough of them. The adolescents are taught what to expect, how to dispose of the products, and the psychologist supports them in this case. In Nuestra Familia, the caregivers remind the children to wash their hands before eating. They have materials that support this activity in visible places for everyone. The home has a stocked first aid kit ready in the infirmary and another in the entrance area. The home currently has a medical emergency fund with A Child's Hope Foundation that is mostly used for the cost of controlled medications and some medical supplies. There have been trainings for children with special conditions such as mental health treatment. The nurse follows up on the cases that require mental health treatment, as well as the house parents to provide their observations and to know how to follow the routine according to the specialist's indications. They have three nurses who work in three different shifts and it is Nurse Erika who coordinates this department.

- Maintaining good practices in this category.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

All children receive the right amount of calories in their meals and the food is prepared in a hygienic manner. The kitchen, dining room and storage area are free of toxic substances and pests. A monthly fumigation service is provided. In addition, the maintenance manager maintains a weekly fumigation routine. He is very attentive to the cold room and food storage to prevent the spread of bugs in foodstuffs such as beans, rice, etc. Therefore, the home has not had any pests. The cooking and preparation areas are well ventilated and lit. The children receive tasty, appetizing, balanced meals every day with their daily protein in any of its presentations. In addition, children receive 2 to 3 servings of fruit and always incorporate vegetables into their meals. Some children have to be encouraged to eat more protein and they look for ways to make their meals tastier. The nurse takes the children every month for a check-up with the nutritionist and these visits are more frequent when a child in need is detected. The nutritionist service is provided by the Children's Hospital of the Californias and currently they only have 2 children under nutrition follow-up. The cooks attend training at least twice a year, and sometimes Mr. Juan participates in the preparation of the food just for his personal enjoyment or to motivate the young boys and girls to also participate in the preparation of food as a formative class of independent life skills.

Maintaining best practices in this category.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home's facilities have been inspected by a qualified person to evaluate safety in the last year, specifically by firefighters and civil protection personnel who have validated its emergency plan folder. In addition, all personnel have been trained in emergency and disaster prevention and response measures. With regard to water quality, the home has a reliable supplier that is responsible for carrying out the necessary actions to guarantee water quality. These actions include routine maintenance, cleaning and disinfection, and changing the container when it serves its purpose. However, it is necessary to build a roof over the container to ensure its freshness and to prevent the deterioration of the container from direct exposure to the sun. Staff have been trained on the importance of drinking water quality, its relationship to health and the need for safe drinking water in sufficient quantities for domestic use, such as drinking, cooking and hygiene. Each bathroom and room has a working light bulb. There is a safe method of drainage that does not contaminate the drinking water. An emergency plan is in place in case of fire, flooding, water loss, etc. The home has a maintenance person who takes care of most of the property's needs and emergencies. For major construction issues, the home has a reliable supplier that is called upon when necessary. The home can withstand the elements such as wind, rain, etc. The children have easy access to water and can drink as much as they want at any given time. The faucets in the toilets and showers are working at 100%. The outdoor facilities are well lit to increase the safety of the children. The home has a preventive maintenance plan and immediate needs are attended to promptly. The electrical infrastructure is in good condition and there are no exposed wires. In the summer there are always some power outages. However, although the home has solar panels, they also have a generator to meet the electrical needs during emergencies, mainly in the refrigerator and cold room to prevent food spoilage.

- Construct a roof to protect the gas tank and the drinking water tank.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

All children are enrolled in school, have internet and computers for their use. The children have personal sessions with a psychopedagogue to help them improve in their areas of opportunity, especially in the areas of reading and mathematics in primary and secondary school. The school is supporting them with counseling and follow-up for children who need it most, and this follow-up is linked to the teacher at the home. Usually the school supports them with this part of literacy and if specialized attention is needed, the home seeks help from a specialist at the Children's Hospital of the Californias. Children 11 years and older are able to read at least at a third grade level, all children 9 years and older can perform simple mathematical operations. The children read for one hour daily and have reading comprehension activities. Andrea the psycho-pedagogue supports the reading process hand-in-hand with the Books Library Reading program. This program has been very well received by the children and with the dynamics of the program, the children have made great progress in reading comprehension. They have in their library more than 75 books in their language and they read according to their interests. Funds and housing are available so that the young adults can continue with their studies even after their time at the home is over. The children have toys and art supplies. This is in the homework area and if they need materials for a craft, it is requested and given to them. The children have had classes on how to use a computer, both at school and at the home itself. The progress of each child is reviewed by the new person who is supporting them in the area of homework, analyzing and evaluating them on an ongoing basis.

- Maintain good practices in this area.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The children have their own space such as drawers to store their belongings and special gifts. The children are given equal opportunities for education and have everything they need for it. There is also scheduled time for the children to participate in extracurricular activities. In addition to sports activities, they have piano lessons on weekends, dance classes, zumba classes, they have had acting classes and are putting on a play related to the festivities. The children with disabilities have access routes to the playground, ramps and have had their glasses adapted if that is a need. The nurse is very supportive of the follow-up in the area of hygiene and health, as well as being attentive to the necessary adaptations for the children with timely follow-up on each case and communicating information to the caregivers and/or appropriate staff. There is a need for a girls dorm to be designed according to their needs and that could accommodate a group of at least 8. However, the director recognizes that this project will require lots of time to be completed as more fundraising is needed for this work.

- Continue fundraising and searching for donors for the construction of the girls dorm.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has a profile or job description for when they are looking for new caregivers. The children are taught to be respectful and to get along well with each other. The children and youth are given the opportunity to see a therapist on a weekly or biweekly basis, with two psychologists for individual therapy and group sessions. On a weekly basis, the staff holds meetings with the therapists to discuss and assess behaviors that have been seen in the children during the week. From there, care is provided for them to receive psychological help. On the other hand, caregivers are evaluated by Orlanda to see if they are quality mentors for the children. Psychologists support the process of explaining puberty changes. Caregivers have training on how to model positive behaviors in children. Caregivers take training with DIF, as long as DIF offers them. Adolescents aged 13 have received training regarding sexuality from psychologists. Adolescents receive aptitude tests to determine their long term academic goals as part of their life plan and in school they also receive this opportunity at school. Work is currently underway to ground the idea of what adolescents want to study as their ideas are still up in the air. There is a documented program in which the children can participate, which is the Plan de Vida y Esperanza (Life and Hope Plan). It has a system of constant communication and support is provided to students in technical or university careers. They have access to a specialist to address common and difficult issues.

- Maintain good practices in this category.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The children can decide what to do in their free time. They can also choose their clothing on a daily basis and in some cases are given suggestions about their attire or grooming while preserving the values of the home and their personal dignity. Each week the children are allowed to participate in menu planning for meals. The menu is available for all children to see in the kitchen and in the office with Juan. Children and caregivers receive information about health care procedures and are given the opportunity to ask questions prior to their administration or visit to the doctor. Child Hope Plans have been implemented by the director and are updated on a monthly basis. The home provides the children with leadership roles and activities where they can practice their leadership skills. They have groups of children who represent all the others and have established strategies for democracy.

- Maintaining good practices in this category.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Each child has his or her birth certificate and it is integrated into his or her file. The children are taught to repair the damages or faults committed, depending on the seriousness of each one. The children have age-appropriate chores on a daily basis; each one in their area has a schedule and specific, individual activities to perform in order to maintain order and cleanliness in their spaces. In this home they celebrate special and local holidays and the children's favorite are the festivities leading up to Christmas, and of course Christmas and New Year's itself. Before these dates they tend to get a little sad, perhaps because they are not with their families or siblings. However, they also get excited when they receive visitors and gifts. The home is very clean, tidy and free of objects that obstruct the passage ways; all objects are stored in the corresponding space. The children participate in talks about democracy and are also taught here at the home to participate in decision making for the wellbeing and agreement of all or almost all. Juan is one of the main mentors for the children, he is always teaching them new household activities and motivates them to take on tasks such as cooking and gardening. Karl and Marsha, the extended volunteers, have been great mentors to the children and teens. They have directed them to pursue personal growth and volunteer activities. They have also involved more team members so that the children and teens can maintain active participation with these activities. Major events are shared with the children, and the children have the opportunity to attend school field trips and special events that are organized outside the home. The children have the opportunity to be accompanied by someone from the home as part of the DIF requirement and home policy.

- Maintain the actions implemented in this category.



Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The level of security is generally adequate according to the surrounding community. However, they need to place some containment posts in two areas of the home, one in the volunteer camp parking area, which is the main entrance for the cars that transport the children to school, and the other in the area adjacent to the administrative offices. These containment posts will help maintain the safety of the children and the home property because of the tendency of motorists to drive at high speeds. They sometimes use the school's entrance to turn their cars around and this has caused at least two collisions with the home's walls. The children are separated by gender and age in the dormitories. All staff have received training in positive discipline and alternatives to corporal punishment. There is a policy that male staff are not to be alone with children under any circumstances and this policy is shared with visitors. A policy is in place to ensure that children are not physically, verbally or emotionally abused. The home guarantees that the children are not hired for any work activity that harms or threatens their physical or emotional health. Caregivers receive training every 6 months on how to avoid and prevent abuse. This is done through group sessions that the employees have with the psychologist Orlanda. Children over 5 years of age have attended training on abuse, in addition to play therapy with the psychologist. The home has a system for checking employee references to meet local standards. Employees have a criminal record clearance letter as part of their job requirements. Each child is evaluated upon entry to identify individual psychological care needs and treatment of traumatic situations. In cases of specialized care needs, the psychologist refers them to the Mental Health Hospital. The home also has two psychologists, one for girls and one for boys. With this support, the children have the opportunity to meet with the therapists on an individual basis. They also have the opportunity to participate in group sessions at least once a month where they discuss issues of common interest.

- Place retaining posts in the parking lot area.



Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The children are bathed daily. At the home the children are always encouraged to be kind to each other and are corrected for misbehavior or bullying among themselves. The children have their own individual beds, the home has enough clothes for all the children and everything to meet their needs. In addition, the house has extra clothing for when new children arrive at the home. The children have sufficient sheets, towels and blankets that are washed continuously. The home has safety protocols in place and conducts a training registry for the children and staff. The children have their own toothbrush and sufficient personal hygiene products. They have art supplies and toys available by age, for all children. The children also have the opportunity to do activities in the kitchen, in the playgrounds, in cleaning and thus earn a little money that they can keep to spend or save to buy something of their interest.

- Maintain the good practices implemented in this category.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children are given the opportunity to be part of a spiritual community with Catholic practice. Even so, if any child arrives with another religious inclination, they are only oriented to the blessing of food, since this is a homogeneous practice of the home. Beyond that, they are not pressured to perform any activity of a religious nature. They are given a talk in which they participate and show respect for their spiritual inclinations. The children are free to participate daily in community prayer or other spiritual rituals. Among the materials available and easily accessible to the children, Nuestra Familia has the rosary, the chaplet of mercy, among others. Every week there is a talk on spiritual growth, they attend mass on Sundays and on special dates or celebrations, they participate in the church choir inside and outside the home. They have catechism classes, and participate in serving mass every month. They have a designated place for meditation and prayer in the chapel and now, with the memorial garden in honor of Mrs. Emma, the children have more space for meditation and prayer.

- Maintain good practices in this category.



Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

On a monthly basis they have financial records of their income and expenses; these are available for review. They also keep receipts and create a profit and loss statement for each month. Monthly and annual tax returns have been filed in accordance with government requirements. They have an annual budget for their general expenses and their bank income is reconciled monthly. The home has an appropriate division of functions or tasks for internal control and conducts internal and external audits for its monthly finances. All of their operating expenses are considered in a detailed annual budget. However, they do not have a budget for their construction projects or improvements greater than \$25,000 dollars, as is the case with the construction project for the ladies' dormitory. The books or accounting records are validated by a certified accountant. This home is highly committed to the transparent use of the resources it receives and is always available to send its reports. It is very important to highlight the great teamwork that they do in this home in financial matters led by Mr. Juan Villagran.

- Have a detailed budget of projects over \$25,000.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The caregivers follow an experienced caregiver for at least one week to mentor them in their adaptation and integration process. In addition, they have a supervisor who is in charge of providing feedback and orientation conversations with the new collaborators. They have an organizational chart that defines team positions and activities. Constant meetings are held to discuss issues of concern and process improvements. In terms of documentation and their operational license, the home has been approved for its civil protection plan and is now only waiting for the evaluations of the home staff, which is in DIF's hands and only depends on them. The staff has attended annual training sessions on attachment and child development, topics that are addressed by the psychologist. The board of directors meets more than twice a year. There is a vacation policy for all staff and each team member has a complete and updated file. Team meetings are held and supervisors schedule regular face-to-face meetings.

- Continue with the necessary steps with DIF to obtain the evaluations of the personnel to obtain their operational license.

Current Improvement Partners



Books, Library Reading (BLR)

BLR's aim is to help kids love to read and read often. We do this through getting them books that match their interests and books that may expand their interests and spark their curiosity. With these books and others, we create a well-organized, fun, and functional library. We also develop reading goals, activities and training for the kids and orphanage staff.



corazón de vida

Corazon de Vida

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.



El Sembrador Ministries

El Sembrador is a Catholic Ministry based on the dynamic New Evangelization and supported by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Through their Sembrando Sonrisas program, they have become one of Nuestra Familia's major support systems since 1985. They have committed to make their best effort with the home's staff so that every child knows that LOVE can conquer all things and that they will love them as their own children.

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



A CHILD'S
HOPE
FOUNDATION