

KEY TOOL #4

FAMILY FUNCTIONS SHARED WITH SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS



Families provide many different kinds of functions for the benefit of their members and the good of society. For the most part, these functions are fulfilled by families in alliance with other institutions.

Below, we provide a list of the major functions families perform (left hand column) with the corresponding institutions, providers, services, and systems (right hand column) that share those functions to a greater or lesser degree.

The first six functions are those that have the most direct significance for federal and state governments. However, at the local level, and especially at the service delivery level, human service professionals and community leaders need to be aware of the significance and interrelationship of other functions fulfilled by families and other public and private providers such as affection, identity, culture, socialization, religion, and recreation.

FAMILY FUNCTIONS	INSTITUTIONS, PROVIDERS, SERVICES, AND SYSTEMS (Public and Private)
Family formation and membership: adoption, birth, death, divorce, and marriage	Formation and dissolution systems: adoption services, divorce lawyers, family courts, family planning and obstetric services, hospice, marriage and divorce counseling, marriage laws, pre-marital preparation, pre-natal care, teen pregnancy programs, mortuaries
Economic support: providing clothing, food, shelter, and other necessities, through income, employment, and other assets	Economic systems: banks, income maintenance and housing programs, insurance, pensions, social insurance, transportation, unions, the workplace
Education: teaching knowledge, competencies, socialization, and life skills	Educational systems: child care, elementary and secondary schools, higher education, job training programs, libraries, pre-school, vocational education
Health and mental health: promoting good physical and mental health, caring for the sick	Health care services and mental health systems: clinics, counseling, health care, professionals' services, hospitals, public and private services, therapy
Protection of vulnerable family members: providing for the emotional and physical well-being and safety of the sick, frail, and troubled family members of all ages	Health and social service systems: charitable organizations, elderly day care, home-based health and social services, mental health agencies, nursing homes, respite care, social service agencies
Social responsibility: setting, teaching, and enforcing appropriate behavior, norms, and rules	Legal system: courts, juvenile homes, laws, prisons, probation
Affection and caring: providing affection, affirmation, intimacy, and mutual care	Support systems: extended family, marriage and family life education, neighborhood and community organizations, peer support groups
Identity: fostering community, ethnic, family, and national identity	Mediating systems: ethnic, community, and religious groups and programs at the local, state, and national levels
Cultural socialization: transmitting social and religious values and traditions	Media, educational, peer, religious, and recreational systems: electronic media, libraries, organizations (e.g., community-based, faith-based, social), places of worship, radio, recreational clubs, schools, and television
Religion: fostering family spirituality and worship	Religious systems: faith-based groups and organizations, places of worship, religious media
Recreation: facilitating diversion, entertainment, leisure	Recreation systems: entertainment industry, libraries, organized sports, recreational facilities