

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