

Unit Seven: The Family

Family definition:

Family is a social system composed of “two or more persons who are joined by bonds of sharing and emotional closeness and who identify themselves as being part of the family. Family is as one of the community organizations.

Family means different things to different people – families may span several generations, several households, and may change in response to life events such as divorce, remarriage, and children leaving the parental home. It is sometimes easier to define a family not by what it looks like but by what it does – caring, supporting, protecting and loving are what families have in common.

Basic Concepts of Families:

1. Families come in many different shapes and sizes and accomplish many different things for different people.
2. Families include the traditional functions and responsibilities assigned by society to families, such as: childbearing/rearing, intimacy, security.
3. Families also include consideration for diversity in the structure, value and context of families. Recognizes culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, disabling, conditions, income, and spirituality.

Types of families:

1. Nuclear conjugal family.
2. Nuclear dyad family.

3. Dual earner family.
4. Extended family.
5. Single-parent family.
6. Step-family (blended family).
7. Binuclear family.
8. Cohabiting family.
9. Communal family.
10. Foster family.
11. Skip generation family.

Problems of Families:

1. **Vulnerable families and Jobless families:** Families where no adult is employed are more vulnerable to some forms of disadvantage. Jobless families are more likely to be economically disadvantaged than families with employment; tend to experience poorer health outcomes; and may find it difficult to get support in times of crisis. Importantly, children growing up in jobless families are more likely to grow up jobless themselves.
2. **One-parent families:** One-parent families refer to families where a child or children are raised in a household with only one parent present. Parents may raise children on their own for a number of reasons, such as the death

of a partner; divorce or separation from a partner; or having no established relationship with the other parent of the child.

3. Indigenous families:

The profile of Indigenous families is different to other Australian families. Primarily, Indigenous people tend to have children at younger ages and reside in larger households than non-indigenous people. Indigenous children are more likely to grow up in one-parent families, although there are often other adults present.

4. Families with caring responsibilities: Most families have caring responsibilities at some point in the life-cycle. In addition to caring for babies and young children, families may also provide care for a member with a chronic illness or disability, or a frail aged relative. Care may be provided in the form of assistance with daily living activities; ad-hoc assistance or assistance with specific tasks; and financial assistance.

5. Families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds:

Families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may encounter a range of challenges that are unique to their situation, such as language barriers in the community or workplace; a lack of information provided in culturally and linguistic appropriate forms; poor knowledge or understanding of Australian social practices; racist attitudes; and bullying at school or in the workplace. Depending on the reason for migration to Australia, there may also be a number of factors impinging on their health and wellbeing, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anger, stress, alienation, poverty or economic hardship, and loneliness.

6. Rural and remote families: Living in a rural or remote area may have an impact on families in a number of ways. For example, it may increase the amount of time families have to travel to access education, health, and community services; or to attend work or pursue leisure activities. The range of services available may be less than that available in the city; and telecommunications and transport may be more important and less available than in urban communities.