

**Mega Concept:** Participant Attribute

**Category:** Health Care Participant

**Concept Name:** Family

**Concept Definition:**

The patient as either a social system or a member of a social system consisting of two or more people who define themselves as a family and share bonds of emotional closeness. “A family is what an individual believes the family to be.” (Hall, 2019, p. 645)

**Scope and Categories:**

Family support is intrinsic to nursing across the lifespan. Newborns to young children are completely dependent on family for basic needs, older children depend on family support for their needs, and young adults transitioning from family of origin to created family need support in developing and maintaining their health during the transition. Mature adults have many family issues related to both raising children and caring for aging parents, while older adults may be increasingly dependent on family members for emotional and physical support.

**Attributes/Criteria:**

A family may be composed of two or more individuals. The types and categories are many with individual unique differences. The family structure has some common functions. Essential to the family structure is communication and interaction of its members. Communication and interaction produce positive change, growth, and cohesion. When communication is lacking the structure becomes dysfunctional with negative interaction and alienation take place. When a family is faced with health crises it is important to keep the lines of communication intact. During the interviewing process, the nurse will assess the dynamics of the family structure. The nurse will observe the behaviors, verbal responses, negative or disruptive actions, or willingness to providing appropriate information, which will determine how to approach the situation:

- The family can delegate or individuals may volunteer to take on a specific duty in seeking resources, forming a structured system and shared responsibility, thus building a sense of control.
- The family may demonstrate negative, disruptive and dysfunctional behavior.

**Theoretical Links**

Four theories can be linked to the family concept

1. Family Systems Theory



# NMNEC Concept: **Family**

2. Structural-Functional Theory
3. Family Stress Theory
4. Family Life Cycle (Developmental) Theory

Within Family Systems Theory, nurses are able to “view the family as a unit and thus focus on observing the interaction among family members rather than studying family members individually” (Wright and Leahy). The basis of this theory reflects points regarding viewing a family system as a sub system of a larger supra- system; it also stipulates that family as a whole is greater than the sum of individual members; however, a change in an individual family member influences an entire family. In addition, family has an ability to balance stability and change.

Structural-Functional Theory views family as a social system where family members have specific roles (mother, father, son, and daughter). Family dynamics strive to establish equilibrium so family is able to function both within the family unit and society.

The Family Stress Theory focuses on the ways in which family reacts to stress. This theory addresses internal context or events that family is able to either control or change; such as beliefs, values, and family structure as well as the external context or events that family has no control over, such as economy, genetics, and maturity of individual family members.

The Family Life Cycle (Developmental) Theory posits that the family passes through stages, and relationships among family members undergo transitional changes. Furthermore, despite functions and roles outlined by families, the main value is attributed to the relationships. Life cycle processes can be disrupted by developmental stressors.

### **Context to Nursing/Healthcare:**

<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>
Integrate understanding of multiple dimensions of family centered care: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family preferences, values</li> <li>• Coordination and integration of care</li> <li>• Information, communication, and education</li> </ul>	Elicit family values, preferences and expressed needs as part of clinical interview, implementation of care plan and evaluation of care	Value seeing health care situations “through families’ eyes”



## NMNEC Concept: **Family**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical comfort and emotional support</li> <li>• involvement of family and friends</li> <li>• Transition and continuity</li> </ul>		
Describe how diverse cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds function as sources of family, values	Communicate family values, preferences, and expressed needs to other members of healthcare team	Respect and encourage individual expression of family values, preferences
	Provide family-centered care with sensitivity and respect for the diversity of human experience	Value the family's expertise with their health and symptoms
		Seek learning opportunities with families who represent all aspects of human diversity
		Recognize personally held attitudes about working with families from different ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds
		Willingly support patient-centered care for families whose values differ from own

### **Interrelated Concepts**

- **Culture:** Cultural background will influence the family's health practices, beliefs (including the cause of illness as well as practices to restore health), values, and customs.
- **Patient Education:** Patient education is vital to help the patient and family achieve optimum levels of health and wellness.
- **Health Promotion:** Health promotion can assist the patient and family to assume healthier behaviors, thus decreasing healthcare costs stress to the family.
- **Communication:** Communication allows nurses to establish therapeutic relationships with patients and families. It is essential that the nurse understands the complexities of family



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relationships, needs, and dynamics.

### **New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium (NMNEC) Required Exemplars:**

- Family Assessment
- Family Centered Care



## NMNEC Concept: **Family**

### **References:**

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### **Resources:**

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Perry, S. (2017). Family dynamics. In J. F. Giddens (Ed.). *Concepts for nursing practice*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 21-28). Elsevier.

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