

Foster homes include both kinship and nonrelative placements. Since the 1980s, the proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives has increased rapidly and been accompanied by a decrease in the number of foster families. As with their nonfoster counterparts, much of the child's adjustment depends on the family's stability and available resources. Even though foster homes are designed to provide short-term care, it is not unusual for children to stay for many years.

Nurses should be aware that on any given day over 55,000 children are in the child welfare system ([Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015b](#)). Children from lower-income, single-mother, and mother-partner families are considerably more likely to be living in foster care ([Berger and Waldfogel, 2004](#)). Children in foster care tend to have a higher than normal incidence of acute and chronic health problems and may experience feelings of isolation or confusion. Foster children are often at risk because of their previous caretaking environment. Nurses should strive to implement strategies to improve the health care for this group of children. In particular, assessment and case management skills are required to involve other disciplines in meeting their needs.

Sociocultural Influences upon the Child and Family

A child and his or her immediate family are nested within a local community of school, peers, and extended family and within a larger community that may be bound by common geography, background, traditions, and an even broader community that incorporates the social, political, and economic elements that influence many aspects of family life. This section of this chapter delves into a deeper discussion of such factors.

[Bronfenbrenner \(1979\)](#) offers a perspective of viewing children and their families within the context of various circles of influence, called an *ecological framework*. This framework posits that individuals adapt in response to changes in their surrounding environments, whether that be the environment of the immediate family, the school, the neighborhood in which the family lives, or the socioeconomic forces that may shape job availability in their