

Working mothers have become the norm in the United States. Maternal employment may have variable effects on preschool children's health ([Mindlin, Jenkins, and Law, 2009](#)). The quality of child care is a persistent concern for all working parents. Determinants of child care quality are based on health and safety requirements, responsive and warm interaction between staff and children, developmentally appropriate activities, trained staff, limited group size, age-appropriate caregivers, adequate staff-to-child ratios, and adequate indoor and outdoor space. Nurses play an important role in helping families find suitable sources of child care and prepare children for this experience (see [Alternate Child Care Arrangements, Chapter 9](#)).

## **Kinship Care**

Since the 1980s, the proportion of children in out-of-home care placed with relatives has increased rapidly. More than 2.7 million American children are cared for by extended family or close family friends at some time in their lives ([Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012](#)). According to US Census Bureau data, kinship caregivers are more likely to be poor, single, older, less educated, and unemployed than families in which at least one parent is present.

## **Foster Parenting**

*Foster care* can be defined as the placement of a child in a stable and approved environment with a non-related family. The living situation may be an approved foster home, possibly with other children, or a pre-adoptive home. Each state provides a standard for the role of foster parent and a process by which to become one. These “parents” contract with the state to provide a home for children for a limited duration. Most states require about 27 hours of training before being on contract and at least 12 hours of continuing education a year. Foster parents may be required to attend a foster parent support group that is often separate from a state agency. Each state has guidelines regarding the relative health of the prospective foster parents and their families, background checks regarding legal issues for the adults, personal interviews, and a safety inspection of the residence and surroundings ([Chamberlain, Price, Leve, et al, 2008](#)).