

ways (Kaakinen, Gedaly-Duff, and Hanson, 2009). When members are gained or lost through events such as marriage, divorce, birth, death, abandonment, or incarceration, the family composition is altered and roles must be redefined or redistributed.

Traditionally, the family structure was either a nuclear or extended family. In recent years, family composition has assumed new configurations, with the single-parent family and blended family becoming prominent forms. The predominant structural pattern in any society depends on the mobility of families as they pursue economic goals and as relationships change. It is not uncommon for children to belong to several different family groups during their lifetime.

Nurses must be able to meet the needs of children from many diverse family structures and home situations. A family's structure affects the direction of nursing care. The US Census Bureau uses four definitions for families: (1) the traditional nuclear family, (2) the nuclear family, (3) the blended family or household, and (4) the extended family or household. In addition, numerous other types of families have been defined, such as single-parent, binuclear, polygamous, communal, and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) families.

## **Traditional Nuclear Family**

A traditional nuclear family consists of a married couple and their biologic children. Children in this type of family live with both biologic parents and, if siblings are present, only full brothers and sisters (i.e., siblings who share the same two biologic parents). No other persons are present in the household (i.e., no step relatives, foster or adopted children, half-siblings, other relatives, or nonrelatives).

## **Nuclear Family**

The nuclear family is composed of two parents and their children. The parent-child relationship may be biologic, step, adoptive, or foster. Sibling ties may be biologic, step, half, or adoptive. The parents are not necessarily married. No other relatives or nonrelatives are present in the household.