

Embracing and Celebrating All Families

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If you were asked to picture a family, what would you see? Many of us might picture a nuclear family that consists of two, married, heterosexual, adults with at least one child. However, this type of family accounts for approximately 20% of American families.

The other 80% of families have different structures, including (but not limited to) grandparents raising grandchildren, families with cohabitating adults, adoptive families, multi-generational families, couples without children, LGBTQ+ families, and blended or stepfamilies. The reality is that families come in all shapes and sizes, and they can include multiple cultures, religions, skin colors, ages, languages, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities, and abilities.



Given the enormous diversity of American families, we need ask if our programming supports and embraces all families? To be more inclusive and affirming:

- Acknowledge and respect that there are multiple ways of being a family.
- Model acceptance of family differences. Avoid using phrases like “traditional family” or “normal family” that convey value and judgement.
- Examine your educational materials (forms, teaching examples, photos, etc.) and make sure they reflect family diversity.
- Use language that includes everyone. Rather than saying “mom” and “dad”, use broader terms like “parent” or “guardian”.
- Create opportunities to talk about and celebrate family differences and strengths.
- Recognize your own assumptions and biases, and if necessary, educate yourself.

As Extension educators, our job is to empower individuals, families, and communities. One of the best ways we can do this is to embrace and celebrate all families.