

## Key Terms of Family Science Identity

Learn some of the key terms and concepts related to the identity of Family Science and its associated professions.

Also available online with source links at [ncfr.org/key-terms-family-science](https://ncfr.org/key-terms-family-science)

### Family Science

<i>Term</i>	<i>Description</i>
Family Science	The scientific study of families and close interpersonal relationships; a scholarly discipline.  Family Science is still referred to in some settings by other terms. “Family studies” was often assigned in earlier stages of the discipline’s development. Other terms still in use that can indicate Family Science include “family relations,” “family ecology,” and “family services.”
Family Science Lens / Approach / Perspective	The Family Science lens refers to using the unique, distinguishing set of characteristics of Family Science to conduct research, develop theory, teach, work with people, and examine policies.  The characteristics are: relationship-focused, strengths-oriented, preventive, evidence-based, and translational.
Family Scientist	One who applies a Family Science lens or approach in their research, theory, pedagogy, practice, or policy work.

### Fields & Professions That Stem From Family Science

<i>Term</i>	<i>Description</i>
Family Life Education	A practice of Family Science in which professionals equip families with information and resources, empowering them to develop knowledge and life skills to strengthen their relationships and well-being.  As its name suggests, Family Life Education — also referred to by acronym FLE — uses an educational approach. It focuses on prevention and emphasizes building on families’ existing strengths.
Family Life Educator	A professional who applies the Family Life Education practice in their work with families as a practitioner. (Within their specializations, a Family Life Educator may have a more specific job title, such as parent educator or relationship educator.)
Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) credential	One who applies a Family Science lens or approach in their research, theory, pedagogy, practice, or policy work.

<p>Parent Education</p>	<p>A common professional area / specialized topic within Family Life Education.</p> <p>Parent education focuses on how parents teach, guide, and socialize children and adolescents, as well as on the changing nature, dynamics, and needs of the parent–child relationship throughout their lifetimes.</p>
<p>Couple and/or Marriage Education</p>	<p>A common professional area / specialized topic within Family Life Education.</p> <p>Couple and/or marriage education focuses on developing and maintaining healthy intimate, interpersonal relationships.</p>
<p>Family Resource Management</p>	<p>A common professional area / specialized topic within Family Life Education.</p> <p>Family resource management focuses on the decisions families and individuals make about developing and allocating resources — including time, money, material and health assets, energy, space, and personal connections — to meet their goals.</p>
<p>Couple, Marriage, and/or Family Therapy</p>	<p>Therapy or counseling that considers the family, couple, and/or marital relationships in which a person exists; a primary delivery method and area of professional practice that applies Family Science. Therapy is often used to treat a variety of issues. A common abbreviation is “MFT” for marriage and family therapy/therapist.</p>
<p>Couple, Marriage, and/or Family Therapist</p>	<p>One who delivers couple, marriage, and/or family therapy; in their delivery, they consider the family, couple, and/or marital relationships in which a person exists. Often has Family Science knowledge at the core of their professional training.</p>
<p>Family Case Management</p>	<p>Works with families to help them negotiate and comply with systems, and supports fixing situations in which there are problems. The impetus for family case management often is a current crisis, and the focus is on needs and solutions in the present.</p>
<p>Family Life Coaching</p>	<p>Uses strengths-based coaching techniques to partner with clients and guide families in achieving goals the family has identified. Combines the use of coaching techniques with Family Science knowledge.</p>
<p>Family Policy</p>	<p>A family policy is a policy that impacts family functioning and well-being through the support of family formation, economic support, child socialization, caregiving, or relationship enhancement. It is a field of study and work that applies Family Science.</p> <p>Related concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Implicit</i> Family Policy: A policy that has indirect consequences on the behaviors and roles of family members (e.g., minimum wage laws). It is different from an explicit family policy as described above.</li> <li>• Family Impact Lens: Refers to examining policies and programs through the lens of how they affect families.</li> <li>• Family Impact Analysis: Examines policies and programs for their impacts on families. It examines how well the policy or program supports, empowers, and strengthens families; respects family diversity; and does not discriminate against families.</li> </ul>

## Terminology of Disciplines

Term	Description
Discipline	<p>A branch of knowledge, instruction, or learning with 1) a unique subject matter, 2) an adequate body of theory and research, 3) a unique methodology, 4) supporting paraphernalia, 5) utility in the form of professions or applications, 6) ability to discipline, or adequately train, its community of scholars, and 7) a belief that it exists.*</p> <p>A more recently suggested eighth criteria is “accumulating history.”†</p> <p>Family Science is a distinct discipline.</p>
Multidisciplinary	<p>Drawing on knowledge from different disciplines, but staying within the boundaries of those disciplines.‡</p> <p>Multidisciplinary signifies "additive." It is like a salad, in which each ingredient stays intact and individually distinguishable.‡</p> <p>Today's discipline of Family Science evolved from multidisciplinary work by scholars in several other disciplines. NCFR remains a multidisciplinary organization, supporting scholars and professionals in many disciplines who have an interest in family.</p>
Interdisciplinary	<p>Analyzing, synthesizing, and harmonizing links between different disciplines into a coordinated, coherent whole. Necessitates a blurring of disciplinary boundaries.‡</p> <p>Interdisciplinary signifies "interactive." It is like a stew, in which each ingredient remains only partially distinguishable.‡</p> <p>The perspective of Family Science can interact with the perspectives of other disciplines in interdisciplinary ways to contribute to a broader understanding of family.</p>
Transdisciplinary	<p>Examining an issue in a way that transcends the traditional boundaries of each of the different disciplines involved.‡</p> <p>Transdisciplinary signifies "holistic." It is like a cake, in which the individual ingredients are no longer distinguishable and the final result is wholly different from the ingredients that made it.‡</p>

\*Burr, W., & Leigh, G. (1983). Famology: A new discipline. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 45(3), 467–480.  
<https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/351653>

†Bailey, S. J., & Gentry, D. B. (2013). Teaching about Family Science as a discipline. *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, 3, 861–883. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3987-5\\_35](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3987-5_35)

‡Choi, B. C. K., & Pak, A. W. P. (2006). Multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in health research, services, and education and policy: 1. Definitions, objectives, and evidence of effectiveness. *Clinical & Investigative Medicine*, 29(6), 351–364.