Family policy issues are defined as those issues fundamentally concerned about families as the basic institution of our society. Society depends upon families to perform certain essential tasks throughout the life cycle that no other institution of our society is able to carry out as well. As defined in the growing literature that is shaping and defining the domain of family policy issues, family policy generally includes four basic areas of family functioning that directly and explicitly concern:

- **Family Composition**: Those issues and policies that affect families.
- **Economic Support**: Those issues and policies that affect families’ responsibility and ability to provide for their dependents’ basic needs.
- **Child-Rearing**: Those issues and policies that concern families’ responsibility and ability to nurture and rear their children.
- **Family Care**: Those issues and policies that concern families’ responsibility and ability to care for, and related to, relatives of all ages.

Family policies are those issues and policies that either reinforce or interfere with the four basic major categories of family functioning identified above.

Goals for actions concerning family relevant issues by the Board of Directors and the Association are to:

- Educate members
- Contribute to the public discourse
- Protect and enhance the ability of the profession to serve families
- Influence public policy

The Board of Directors and Association shall be guided in selection of relevant social and family issues by consideration of whether issues are those that are:

- Commanding issues that make a significant difference for the practice of marriage and family therapy and/or
- Commanding issues that make a significant difference for the well-being of families and relationships

**Process for Identification, Selection, and Study of Family Policy Issues**

- Issues are identified through a variety of initiating sources. These sources include members of the AAMFT Board of Directors, the membership of the AAMFT staff, and the general AAMFT membership.
- When potential issues are identified, the President of the AAMFT Board of Directors shall appoint a Task Force to conduct an initial review of each of the issues that are identified. This Task Force shall recommend to the Board which issues merit further study and consideration by the AAMFT.
- For each issue recommended for further study, the Task Force may recommend the process for review and study and, in consultation with the CEO, the fiscal and human resources necessary to complete such a review and study.
- If a decision is made by the Board that further study is required, the President, in consultation with and as approved by the Board, will establish a mechanism to study the issue (e.g., appointment of Task Force, direction to CEO, or other mechanism appropriate to the issue identified). Study of identified issue should include
  - A primary emphasis on familial/relational aspects;
  - Role of the larger context (e.g., community, political/ideological, socio-cultural, legal, and/or historical);
  - Consideration of the effect of policy options on the practice and profession of marriage and family therapy, client families of marriage and family therapists,
and the context directly pertinent to the well-being of families; and

• Explicit consideration of ethics and values.

• The study process may include, but is not limited to, the following: a review of the relevant literature and other available information, input from and dialogue with AAMFT members, information presented and discussions held in conjunction with the AAMFT Annual Conference and other public conversations and communications.

• The completed study shall be presented to the Board and may include recommendations for the Board’s consideration.

• Recommendations to the Board in any report provided by Task Forces or staff, or via other reporting mechanisms, may include, but are not limited to:
  • No further action by the Board of Directors;
  • Further study;
  • Dissemination of information to the membership, public, and/or media;
  • Possible mechanisms for continued dialogue;
  • Possible collaboration with other organizations or entities;
  • Adoption of a formal position and a rationale for that position; and
  • Adoption of a formal position and a rationale for that position, with associated advocacy activities.

• Recommendations may be accompanied by analysis of the fiscal and human resources necessary to implement the recommendations as appropriate.