



Natural Family Planning Ministry in the Catholic Dioceses of the United States

Resource Guide for Diocesan NFP Teachers

Thank you for becoming a Natural Family Planning teacher. Through your commitment and the work you will be involved in, you will be instrumental in helping husbands and wives build strong marriages and families as they live God's design for life and love.

The information in this resource is provided to familiarize you with diocesan NFP ministry as well as the activities of the Diocesan Development Program for NFP, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Please feel free to contact us at 202-541-3240/3070 or nfp@usccb.org.

May Our Lord bless you abundantly for the generous gift of your time and talents to NFP ministry.

Diocesan NFP Ministry

Diocesan NFP ministry provides instruction in natural methods of fertility regulation and education on related issues. It is integrated into the structure of the diocese, with an NFP coordinator appointed by the bishop and having NFP teachers who are accountable to and work in cooperation with the NFP coordinator. The primary focus of diocesan NFP ministry is the provision of quality NFP services to married and engaged couples. (Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry, p. 5)

Natural Family Planning (NFP) services offered under the auspices of a Catholic diocese have a two-fold purpose: they must teach NFP methodology, and they must also integrate the Church's teachings on human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood in NFP instruction.¹ A central aspect of this ministry includes integrating NFP information in pre-marriage and marriage enrichment programs.² Often chastity education is a component of this ministry as well as outreach education especially to clergy, health care professionals and educators. In its attempt to educate about and provide witness to God's plan for life and love, diocesan NFP ministry is an integral part of the Church's wider call to build a Culture of Life.

NFP ministry exists in the diocesan structure in a variety of forms. Most are programs of the office for Marriage and Family Life. Some are programs of a Catholic hospital or Catholic Charities. In a few dioceses, NFP is a diocesan department of its own, while yet others operate as a "federation" of autonomous providers to whom a diocesan staff person serves as liaison. A small number of diocesan NFP programs are separate organizations which operate with the "blessing" of the local bishop while remaining independent of the diocese. In dioceses where no staff person has responsibility for NFP, autonomous teachers provide the service. In such cases, often a parish priest will encourage and promote the work of such NFP teachers.

COMPONENTS

Regardless of the structure, well rounded diocesan NFP ministry should have the following components:³

- an episcopally appointed diocesan NFP coordinator and certified NFP teachers
- a program philosophy with clear goals and objectives including guidelines governing NFP education
- diocesan approved couple/client NFP curricula
- NFP classes
- a strong presence in marriage preparation programs
- educational opportunities for NFP teachers, couples/clients, and others in the diocese to learn more about NFP and Church teachings.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability within diocesan NFP ministry is important. Ideally, NFP ministry follows a clear chain of command that looks something like this:

- NFP teacher and other staff report to the diocesan NFP coordinator
- diocesan NFP coordinator reports to a supervisor (e.g., family life director, chancellor, etc.) who reports to the bishop
- or diocesan NFP coordinator reports to the bishop.

Diocesan NFP Teacher

A diocesan NFP teacher's primary role is to provide NFP instruction and follow-up to couples/clients. He or she conveys respect for each couple/client and promotes their autonomy in the use of NFP. By integrating Catholic teachings on human sexuality, marriage, and family life into their instruction, a diocesan NFP teacher encourages couples/clients to grow in their marital relationship. Diocesan NFP teachers are accountable to and work in cooperation with the diocesan NFP coordinator. (Standards, p. 9)

The diocesan NFP teacher is typically certified in the NFP system of his/her choice (e.g., BOMA, Couple to Couple League, Creighton Model FertilityCare™, etc.). As part of the diocesan team, the NFP teacher is knowledgeable of and follows all diocesan NFP program guidelines (e.g., procedures for advertising NFP classes; requirements for record keeping or continuing education, attendance at meetings, etc.). If the diocesan NFP teacher ministers in a diocese that has implemented the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*, he/she will be invited by the diocesan NFP coordinator to meet those *Standards* (see *Standards*, pp. 9-12).

The Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning

The Diocesan Development Program for Natural Family Planning (DDP/NFP) was established in 1981. It is a program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities. The DDP/NFP works under the guidance and direction of the Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities and assists dioceses in conducting broad, decisive and systematic efforts "to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected and applied" (see *Familiaris consortio*, 35).

The activities of the DDP/NFP include:

- ongoing individual consultation to assist diocesan NFP coordinators to initiate or develop diocesan NFP ministry
- publishing generic NFP resources
- providing periodic conferences for NFP coordinators, teachers and consultants
- co-sponsoring an academic conference focusing on the theology, philosophy, and science of NFP (proceedings are published)
- assisting dioceses in implementing the *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*
- serving as liaison for the Catholic Church at the national level to non-sectarian NFP providers
- acting as a resource and archival center for the bishops and the NFP community.

The work of the DDP is augmented by a NFP National Advisory Board, whose members provide ongoing support on matters of importance to diocesan NFP coordinators and teachers. The Advisory Board is instrumental in helping the DDP/NFP staff review diocesan program information submitted for Endorsement under the *Standards*.

Helping
*Helping couples to deepen
conjugal love and achieve
responsible parenthood is
part of the Church's total
pastoral ministry to
Catholic spouses. Fulfill-
ment of this ministry in-
cludes both education and
pastoral care. This means
instilling conviction and
offering practical help to
those who wish to live out
their parenthood in a truly
responsible way.*

RESOURCES

These publications are among the resources published by the DDP/NFP. For a more complete listing of NFP resources, see www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp.htm.

NFP Forum–Diocesan Activity Report. Newsletter published biannually. Includes brief articles on NFP, excerpts from episcopal statements, information about local programs, as well as a national calendar of events. Free. *Contact DDP/NFP to be put on mailing list.*

Current Medical Research. Supplement to the newsletter. Includes summaries of current research on the science of NFP as well as on related research. Free. *Contact DDP/NFP to be put on mailing list.*

National Directory of Diocesan NFP Coordinators. Contact information of diocesan NFP coordinators. Includes appendices listing non-sectarian NFP providers and international NFP contacts. Available only at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/resources.htm.

NFP Teacher Training Programs: Annotated Directory. Comprehensive listing of national, regional and local NFP teacher training programs. Available only at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/resources.htm.

Standards for Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry. Outlines specific criteria for diocesan NFP ministry. Available at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/resources.htm; also available in print from USCCB Publishing 1-800-235-8722.

National Diocesan NFP Program Profile. Annual survey of diocesan NFP programs. Provides summary information about staffing, budgets and services. Also available at www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp.htm

THE DDP/NFP IS READY TO ASSIST YOU

Once you achieve your NFP teacher certification, please feel free to contact the DDP/NFP. Your name can be included on the mailing list to receive informational mailings, as well as the newsletters, *NFP Forum–Diocesan Activity Report* and *Current Medical Research*. These resources will help keep you “connected” to the Catholic NFP community in the U.S.

If you are not familiar with the structure of your diocese, and how NFP fits into that structure, the DDP/NFP can help you find the appropriate person to put you in touch with the diocesan NFP team.

If you live in an area that does not have an official diocesan NFP ministry, the DDP can guide you in developing an outreach to the diocese.



Diocesan Development Program for
Natural Family Planning

Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 4th St., N.E.

Washington, DC 20017

202-541-3240/3070

202-541-3054 FAX

1-866-582-0943 ORDERS

nfp@usccb.org

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¹ For a complete listing of the components of diocesan NFP ministry see *Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry*, Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2001; www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/standardsoutline.htm.

² See *Standards*, p. 7. See also, Bishops' Committee for Pastoral Research and Practices. *Faithful to Each Other Forever. A Catholic Handbook of Pastoral Help for Marriage Preparation*. Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference, Inc., 1988, p. 47.

³ For details of these components, see *Standards*, pp. 5-8 & 13-15.