

DIOCESAN NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING MINISTRY
NATIONAL 2018 PROFILE REPORT

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM
Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
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OVERVIEW

In January 2019, 197 dioceses were invited to participate in the annual *Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry National Profile (Profile)* survey. Sixty-eight questionnaires were returned for the 2018 *Profile* survey.

The *Profile* serves several important functions. The composite data provides information on broad Natural Family Planning (NFP) programmatic trends which enables the NFP Program staff of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to develop strategies and supportive resources that support local NFP efforts. Because the *Profile* provides individual portraits of diocesan NFP ministry, it is an excellent tool for diocesan staff to annually capture their own information/statistics to compare with national NFP trends.

Some dioceses have made great strides to integrate NFP into all educational efforts on human sexuality, marriage and family life. At the same time, there exists unevenness in NFP efforts across the country. Given the range of pastoral circumstances from one diocese to another, NFP programs continue to vary in availability, viability, and effectiveness. The reasons for this unevenness are complex. In many cases, as one diocese improves its NFP program, another diocesan program is impacted adversely due to teacher loss, budget cuts, modest public ecclesial support and/or diocesan restructuring. It is notable that some smaller dioceses have much larger programs with more limited resources than dioceses of much greater size and resources. Also critical is the need for diocesan NFP staff to have a mature understanding of Church teaching on human sexuality, marriage, conjugal love, responsible parenthood and the science and methods of NFP. This ensures that diocesan NFP ministry is set within the context of Church teaching. When NFP services follow in concert with or after catechesis in Church teaching, married couples are more apt to see that NFP methods are a genuine way to embody those teachings. Repeatedly, nothing strengthens individual NFP diocesan programs than when the diocesan bishop gives visible support, regular encouragement, and funding to NFP efforts. When a bishop acknowledges NFP, as a vital element of marriage ministry, NFP efforts blossom in a diocese.

The following 2018 *Profile* summary of responses to key questions gives a snapshot of the current state of diocesan NFP ministry throughout the United States.

SUMMARY

1. Since the Profile began in 1990, almost all diocesan programs have included some level of NFP education in their marriage ministries. Many have increased steadily the length of time and quality of materials offered to couples preparing for marriage. This is a very positive trend.

2. Limited funding remains a recurring and significant stumbling block for NFP efforts. Nationally, diocesan NFP programs remain severely underfunded. Most diocesan programs surveyed (58%) budgeted less than \$5,000 for NFP programs. The majority of program on less than \$10,000 per year. A handful of diocesan budgets (22%) exceed \$30,000. Many programs rely on indirect funding collected from other sources, e.g., NFP materials, donations from parishes, Knights of Columbus councils, fee for course instruction, and follow-up fees.
3. In the annual diocesan budget, most dioceses do not show dedicated funds for NFP ministry. Rarely is NFP funding identified as a specific line item.
4. In the 2018 survey, seventytwo percent of diocesan NFP programs are not asked to submit an annual report of their activities to their bishop.
5. The majority of dioceses have someone appointed or recognized as the “official” diocesan NFP coordinator. Many NFP programs (88%) share funding, materials, and staff support of an umbrella department, e.g., Marriage and Family Life Office. Forty-three percent are reliant on part time paid staff and volunteers to support NFP efforts. Only four percent have a full-time paid NFP coordinator.
6. The majority of the dioceses include NFP in their marriage preparation guidelines (94%). In reality however, there is inconsistency in the quality and strength of NFP education. It can be argued that most newly married couples fail to take full advantage of NFP in their conjugal life. This assumption is supported by the total number of all marriages in the Church (147,464¹) as compared to the total number of individuals who received some form of presentation or introduction to NFP (123, 855) and the 15,782² that took a course of instruction in NFP in 2018. In a culture where in the very nature of marriage and the two-fold meaning of the conjugal act, love and life, have been ruptured, a renewed national effort is needed to inspire couples to fully understand and embrace the Church’s beautiful teaching on human sexuality, conjugal love and responsible parenthood within marriage.
7. Thirteen of the responding dioceses require couples to take a full NFP course of instruction before marriage. Just several years ago only a few dioceses required a full course of NFP instruction as part of marriage preparation efforts.³ This number has increased four-fold in the last decade. A number of dioceses are considering adding a full

¹ *The Official Catholic Directory 2018*. The comparison of total number of marriages nationally is not meant to be understood as a direct comparison of NFP class attendance in dioceses around the country. Rather, it is a useful comparison to raise the essential question of why fewer couples choose to learn an NFP method juxtaposed to the total number of marriages in the Church. Obtaining data on couple’s resistance to embracing NFP as part of their conjugal love life will help shape the presentation and content of NFP diocesan programming efforts.

² See, *2018 Profile Report*, Q.22.

³ See, *Profile Report*, Q.30 and *Requiring a Full Course of NFP Instruction in Marriage Preparation—a Report* available at: www.usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/nfp-topics-and-resources.cfm.

course of NFP to their marriage preparation requirements. Anecdotally, it seems that more and more individual priests are encouraging couples to take a full course of NFP as part of marriage preparation, even if not required by their diocese.

8. The majority of diocesan marriage preparation programs make an effort to provide basic NFP information to various groups, with special attention directed toward couples preparing for marriage (e.g., booklets, fact-sheets, witness couple talks and NFP course instruction). The amount of time devoted to the discussions of NFP varies greatly.

CONCLUSION

Since 1990, this *Diocesan NFP Profile Report* has identified some positive national advances—notably NFP education has moved from the periphery into the heart of diocesan marriage preparation ministry. As stated previously, nationally, there remains the challenge to substantially integrate within all levels of catechesis a more sophisticated understanding of human sexuality and the nature of marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood among the faithful. This will enable men and women, when they marry, to more readily embrace God’s plan for their marriage. In this context, the methods of Natural Family Planning will be embraced as a gift of wisdom and knowledge to live God’s vision of married love.

Today, few couples preparing for marriage, and married couples themselves, do not grasp the Church’s rich teachings on human sexuality and marriage. People do not grasp why contraception is intrinsically wrong or harmful to the marital union. For many couples, it is difficult to understand how the modern methods of NFP differ from contraception. Although not represented in the following results, USCCB NFP staff have information on those dioceses that have addressed this difficulty by developing robust catechesis. The catechetical focus is centered on the human person as made in God’s image, the nature of human sexuality (especially using the Theology of the Body), the nature of marriage, conjugal love, responsible parenthood, the blessing of children and the family. In such diocesan NFP programs, with the starting point as God’s plan for marriage, NFP education is then introduced as a natural support. When this approach is implemented, diocesan NFP staff report that more couples not only take NFP classes but embrace it as part of the whole of Church teaching on God’s gifts to men and women.

Finally, when evaluating any diocesan NFP program, the most important pastoral leadership question can be summed up with a simple “yes” or “no”: *Can couples who wish to be faithful to Church teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood readily get the NFP support they need?* The answer to this question will determine how best to plan and support local diocesan NFP ministry.

**Gratitude is extended to the following dioceses
for participating in the 2018 Profile Report**

Allentown, Alexandria, Amarillo, Arlington, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Biloxi, Bismarck, Boise, Burlington, Camden, Charleston, Charlotte, Cheyenne, Chicago, Cleveland, Colorado Springs, Corpus Christi, Crookston, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Dodge City, Evansville, Fargo, Fort Worth, Galveston-Houston, Gary, Gaylord, Green Bay, Greensburg, Kansas City, KS, Knoxville, La Crosse, Laredo, Lincoln, Los Angeles, Louisville, Madison, Memphis, Milwaukee, New York, Newark, Norwich, Oakland, Omaha, Orange, Palm Beach, Peoria, Phoenix, Portland (OR), Reno, Richmond, Rockford, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Savannah, Springfield (IL), St. Augustine, St. Cloud, St. Louis, St. Paul and Minneapolis, Steubenville, Venice, Washington, Wichita, Winona

I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

1) The diocesan NFP Program is: *(check one)*

- 88% Part of the office of Marriage and Family Life
- 0% A service of one of our Catholic hospital(s)
- 3% Part of Catholic Charities
- 3% Its own department
- 6% No response

N=68

2) Who is responsible for coordinating NFP Ministry? *(e.g., Family Life Director, NFP Coordinator, Respect Life Director, etc.)*

- 43% Diocesan NFP Coordinator
- 41% Family Life Director
- 1% Respect Life Director
- 4% No person designated
- 11% No response

N=68

How long have you been the NFP coordinator?

The range of experience is from a few months to over 30+ years. The majority of coordinators have held the position for 7 years with a combined total of 469 years of experience.

N=66

3) For this position, NFP work is: *(check one)*

- 53% Part of full-time responsibilities
- 4% Full-time, paid
- 0% Full-time, volunteer
- 28% Part-time, paid
- 15% Part-time, volunteer

N=68

4) Is the NFP coordinator trained in NFP methodology? *(Check one)*

- 82% Yes
- 18% No

N=66

- 5) If the answer to question (4) is “Yes,” for which of the following roles was the NFP coordinator trained? (*Check all that apply*)

(*Frequency*)

37 Teacher 47 User 30 Promoter *N*=55

If a teacher, how long has the person been teaching?

The average teaching experience is 18 years. *N*=34

- 6) If you answered question (5), please indicate which school(s) of NFP trained the coordinator: (*Check all that apply*)

(*Frequency*)

12 Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)
22 Couple to Couple League (CCL)
22 Creighton Model *FertilityCare*TM Center
9 Family of the Americas Foundation
6 Marquette University’s Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)
7 Northwest Family Services

N=55

- 7) How many NFP teachers are part of the diocesan program? (*Count teaching couples as two*)

Total number of teachers: 1,234

The average number of teachers: 19

N=64

- 8) Which statement best describes the NFP program policy regarding remuneration of its teachers? (*Check one*)

56% Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We do not give them a stipend.
21% Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We give them a stipend to cover expenses.
7% We pay our NFP instructors (*part and/or full time*).
18% Salaries/stipends for instructors are provided by other sources (*e.g., Catholic Hospital, Knights of Columbus, etc.*).

N=66

- 9) Which organization trains the diocesan teachers? (*Check all that apply*)

(*Frequency*)

34 Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)

53	Couple to Couple League (CCL)	
52	Creighton Model FertilityCare TM Center	
23	Family of the Americas Foundation	
17	Marquette University's Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)	
15	Northwest Family Services	N=55

10) Does the diocese have an NFP Advisory Committee?
 26% Yes 74% No N=68

11) Do you prepare an annual diocesan report on NFP ministry?
 26% Yes 74% No N=68

II. PROGRAM BUDGET

12) What was the total operating budget for NFP ministry last year? (*Estimate should include salaries, stipends, postage, materials, etc.*)

11%	\$0	
16%	\$1 - 999	
25%	\$1,000 - 4,999	
5%	\$5,000 - 9,999	
21%	\$10,000 - 29,999	
9%	\$30,000 - 49,999	
7%	\$50,000 - 69,999	
6%	\$70,000+	N=67

13) Of the total operating budget for NFP ministry, how much was directly funded by the diocese last year?

14%	\$0	
16%	\$1 - 999	
34%	\$1,000 - 4,999	
8%	\$5,000 - 9,999	
19%	\$10,000 - 29,999	
11%	\$30,000 - 49,999	
3%	\$50,000 - 69,999	
6%	\$70,000+	N=67

14) How much additional money was generated by all NFP activities? (e.g., introductory sessions, class fees, seminars, materials, etc.)

50%	\$0	
19%	\$1- 999	
12%	\$1,000 - 4,999	
6%	\$5,000 - 9,999	
13%	\$10,000>	N=64

15) Is there a separate fee for an introductory session? (*Check one*)

19 Yes	39 No	N=66
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Comment: In over 60% of NFP programs, the average fee for an introductory session is less than \$40.00. The amount charged varied from nothing to a high of \$50+ depending on materials and length of the introductory session(s).

N=18

16) Is there a charge or a fee for a full course in NFP? (*Check one*)

88% Yes	12% No	N=64
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17) If the answer to question (16) is “Yes,” how is a separate fee determined for a full course in NFP? (*Check one*)

10%	Diocesan NFP staff determines fees
61%	Individual NFP provider determines fees
22%	Combination of diocesan staff and individual NFP provider determine fees
7%	No response

N=59

18) How much is charged to clients/couples for a full course in NFP?

7%	\$0	
2%	\$1 - 25	
7%	\$26 - 45	
0%	\$46 - 65	
7%	\$66 - 85	
10%	\$86 - 99	
67%	\$100>	N=54

Comment: Most fees vary from \$66 to over \$100+, depending on materials, length of course, and the number of follow-up services required.

- 19) Is a separate fee charged for follow-up? (*Check one*)
 46% Yes 54% No *N=57*

Comment: The average charge for a follow-up session was less than \$45.

N=23

III. PROGRAM SERVICE

- 20) Which NFP method(s) is currently taught in the diocesan program? (*Check all that apply*)

(*Frequency*)

- 57 Cervical Mucus Method
 19 Sympto-Hormonal Method
 55 Sympto-Thermal
 4 Other *N=63*

- 21) How many individuals (couples count as two) in the diocese received an introductory/promotional talk on NFP during the last twelve months?

More than 123,855 individuals received some information/instruction on NFP.

N=60

- 22) How many individuals (couples count as two) in the diocese attended NFP class/instruction during the last twelve months?

More than 15,782 individuals attended a class/instruction on NFP. *N=49*

- 23) Does the diocese have guidelines for marriage preparation?

93% Yes 7% No *N=67*

- 24) If the answer to question (23) was “Yes” is NFP included in the guidelines for marriage preparation?

94% Yes 6% No *N=65*

25) On average how much time is allowed for NFP education in marriage preparation programs? (*Give your best estimate*)

7%	0 minutes - 15 minutes	
15%	16 minutes - 30 minutes	
14%	31 minutes - 45 minutes	
22%	46 minutes - 1 hour	
41%	1 hour - 2 hours+	N=68

26) Does the (arch)diocese require an introductory session to NFP for the engaged? (*Check one*)

46% Yes	54% No	N=68
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27) If the answer to question (26) is “Yes,” how much time is allotted to the required NFP introductory session?

8%	30 minutes	
20%	45 minutes	
72%	1 hour - 2 hours	N=35

28) If the answer to question (26) is “Yes”, what is the content of the required NFP introductory session? (*Check all that apply*)

(*Frequency*)

42	The appropriate Church teachings	
31	Reproductive anatomy & physiology	
40	Basic NFP science (e.g., <i>all the signs of fertility discussed</i>)	
33	Basic NFP methodology (e.g., an overview of all the specific NFP systems offered in your diocese)	
42	Benefits of NFP	
27	Contraindications of various contraceptives	
36	NFP witness talk	N=45

29) Does the diocese require a full *course* in NFP for engaged couples? (*Check one*)

13 Yes	53 No	N=66
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30) Is the diocese moving toward mandating a full course of NFP instruction for engaged couples?

12 Yes

88 No

N=59

Program Resources

The following documents and links are useful in strengthening diocesan NFP programs.

Diocesan Plan for Natural Family Planning Program Development. Washington, DC: Diocesan Development Program for NFP, 1981. (Available online at www.usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/upload/Diocesan-Plan.pdf; orders, 1-866-582-0943.)

Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Office of Publishing and Promotion Services, 2000. (Available at: www.usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/standards.cfm.)

To read about dioceses that have implemented a requirement for a complete NFP course in marriage preparation see <http://www.usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/nfp-topics-and-resources.cfm>.

For past national reports on diocesan NFP ministry see <http://www.usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/national-survey-profile.cfm>.

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