

**DIOCESAN NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING MINISTRY**  
**NATIONAL 2019 PROFILE REPORT**

**NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM**  
**Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth**  
**United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**  
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NATIONAL  
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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-nine questionnaires were returned for the 2019 *Profile* survey.

The *Profile* serves several vital functions. The composite data provides information on broad Natural Family Planning (NFP) programmatic trends, enabling the NFP Program staff of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to develop strategies and 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 information/statistics to compare a diocesan program 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 and viability. The reasons for this unevenness are complex. In many cases, as one diocese deepens its commitment to NFP educational efforts and financial support, another diocesan program is impacted adversely due to teacher loss, budget cuts, modest public ecclesial support, and diocesan restructuring. Notably, some smaller dioceses have more robust NFP programs with fewer resources than dioceses of much greater size.

There remains a critical need for diocesan NFP staff to have a thorough understanding of Church teaching on human sexuality, marriage, conjugal love, responsible parenthood, and the science and methods of NFP. From this context, it embeds diocesan NFP ministry within the broader framework of Church teaching. When NFP services follow in concert with catechesis in Church teaching, married couples are more apt to see that NFP methods are a genuine way to embody those teachings.

Every year, respondents state that NFP diocesan programs strengthen appreciably when a 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 2019 *Profile* summary of responses to central questions gives a broad view of the diocesan NFP ministry's current state throughout the United States.

## SUMMARY

1. Since the Profile began in 1990, almost all diocesan programs have included some NFP education in their marriage ministries. Many have increased steadily the length of time and quality of materials offered to couples preparing for marriage.
2. Limited funding remains a major stumbling block. Nationally, diocesan NFP programs remain underfunded. Fifty-three percent of dioceses surveyed budgeted less than \$5,000 for NFP programs. Sixty-four percent of all NFP diocesan funded programs operate on less than \$10,000 per year. A handful of diocesan budgets (21%) exceed \$30,000. Many programs rely on funding collected from other sources such as the sale of NFP materials, donations from parishes, grants from local Knights of Columbus Councils, fees for course instruction, follow-up fees, etc.
3. In the annual diocesan budget, most dioceses do not identify dedicated funds for NFP ministry. Rarely is NFP funding identified as a specific budget line item. Only thirty-five percent of diocesan NFP programs require an annual report. It should be noted that an annual report to the bishop can provide strong testament to the important work of the NFP ministry.
4. In most responding dioceses, NFP programs share funding, materials, and staff support of an umbrella department (e.g., Marriage and Family Life Office). Thirty percent rely on part-time paid staff and volunteers to support NFP efforts. Only eight percent have a full-time paid NFP coordinator. Of the sample population, seven percent of the dioceses do not have an NFP coordinator.
5. The majority of dioceses include NFP in their marriage preparation guidelines (84%). However, there is inconsistency in the quality and strength of NFP education.
6. Most couples do not take a full course of NFP as part of marriage preparation. Based on the 2019 survey, only 9,223 individuals took a full course. In 2019, there were 137,885<sup>1</sup> Catholic marriages. The moral implication is clear. In a culture wherein 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 within marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> CARA (Center for Applied Research for the Apostolate). The total number of marriages is not meant to be understood as a direct comparison of NFP class attendance to the newly married in 2019, but rather to simply raise an important question about couples wanting to learn an NFP method in the year surveyed juxtaposed to the number of actual marriages. Common sense suggests that if a particular diocese has a large number of marriages in the year, that number ought to be somewhat reflected in the number of participants in the annual NFP classes. Unfortunately, and typically, NFP class attendance is underrepresented than the total number of marriages in a diocese.

7. Nine of the responding dioceses require couples to take a full NFP course of instruction before marriage. Fifty-nine do not. Several years ago, very few dioceses required a full course of NFP instruction as part of marriage preparation efforts.<sup>2</sup> This number has increased four-fold in the last decade. Several dioceses (12) are considering adding a full 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 particular attention directed toward couples preparing for marriage (e.g., booklets, fact-sheets, witness couple talks, and NFP course instruction, etc.). The amount of time devoted to the discussions of NFP varies significantly from a few minutes to over two hours.

## **CONCLUSION**

Since 1990, this *Diocesan NFP Profile Report* has identified some positive national advances, notably moving NFP education from the periphery into the diocesan marriage preparation ministry's heart. As stated previously, nationally, there is a great need 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. It will enable men and women, as married couples, to more readily embrace God's plan for their marriages. In this context, education in Natural Family Planning methods will be understood as an instrument and a blessing that helps husband and wife live God's vision of married love.

Currently, most couples preparing for marriage, and married couples themselves, do not grasp the Church's rich teachings on human sexuality and marriage (recall that most often the time spent in proximate marriage preparation is too late; remote education and formation is essential). In general, men and women do not understand why contraception is morally wrong or harmful to the marital union. It is difficult for many couples to know how the modern methods of NFP are distinct 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 catechesis focuses 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 and responsible parenthood, and the value of children. With God's plan for marriage as the starting point, NFP education is understood as a natural form of support to married love. By conveying this beautiful vision to couples, diocesan NFP staff report that more couples not only take NFP classes but accept and embrace the fullness of Church teaching.

Finally, when evaluating any diocesan NFP program, the most crucial 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 obtain the NFP support they need?* The answer to this question will determine how best to plan and support local diocesan NFP ministry.

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<sup>2</sup> See, *Profile Report*, Q.30 and *Requiring a Full Course of NFP Instruction in Marriage Preparation—a Report* (September 2008) available at: <https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/nfp-program-topics-resources>.

## I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

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

77% Part of the office of Marriage and Family Life  
3% A service of one of our Catholic hospital(s)  
3% Part of Catholic Charities  
2% Its own department  
15% No Response N=69

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

38% Diocesan NFP Coordinator  
36% Family Life Director  
0% Respect Life Director  
10% No person designated  
16% No Response N=69

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 eight years, with a combined total of 532 years of experience.

N=64

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

57% Part of full-time responsibilities  
6% Full-time, paid  
0% Full-time volunteer  
28% Part-time, paid  
9% Part-time, volunteer N=65

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

80% Yes      20% No N=64

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)*  
53 Teacher      85 User      47 Promoter N=53

If a teacher, how long has the person been teaching? Average is 16 yrs. N=28

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

(*Frequency*)

15	Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)	
20	Creighton Model <i>FertilityCare</i> <sup>TM</sup> Center	
6	Family of the Americas Foundation	
21	Couple to Couple League (CCL)	
6	Northwest Family Services	
6	Marquette University's Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)	N=54

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

Total number of teachers: 938

The average number of teachers: 15 N=63

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

42%	Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We do not give them a stipend.
19%	Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We give them a stipend to cover expenses.
11%	We pay our NFP instructors ( <i>part and/or full time</i> ).
28%	Salaries/stipends for instructors are provided by other sources ( <i>e.g., Catholic Hospital, Knights of Columbus, etc.</i> ).

N=64

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

(*Frequency*)

31	Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)	
48	Couple to Couple League (CCL)	
50	Creighton Model <i>FertilityCare</i> <sup>TM</sup> Center	
18	Northwest Family Services	
19	Family of the Americas Foundation	
17	Marquette University's Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)	N=63

- 11) Do you prepare an annual diocesan report on NFP ministry?

35% Yes      65% 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.*)

10	\$0	
11	\$1 - 999	
17	\$1,000 - 4,999	
5	\$5,000 - 9,999	
12	\$10,000 - 29,999	
5	\$30,000 - 49,999	
4	\$50,000 - 69,999	
4	\$70,000+	N=68

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

18%	\$0	
18%	\$1 - 999	
24%	\$1,000 - 4,999	
7%	\$5,000 - 9,999	
21%	\$10,000 - 29,999	
6%	\$30,000 - 49,999	
1%	\$50,000 - 69,999	
6%	\$70,000+	N=68

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

51%	\$0	
18%	\$1- 999	
14%	\$1,000 - 4,999	
5%	\$5,000 - 9,999	
12%	\$10,000+	N=65

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

33% Yes      59% No      8% No Response      N=64

Comment: In over 60% of NFP programs, the average fee for an introductory session is \$40 or less. The amount charged varied from nothing to a high of \$50+ depending on the introductory session's materials and length.

N=22

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

84% Yes      16% No      N=62

17) If the answer to question (16) is “Yes,” how is a separate fee determined for a full course in NFP? (*Check one*)

- 9% Diocesan NFP staff determines fees
- 62% Individual NFP provider determines fees
- 18% Combination of diocesan staff and individual NFP provider determine fees
- 11% No Response

N=69

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

- 7% \$0
- 0% \$1 - 25
- 4% \$26 - 45
- 10% \$46 - 65
- 2% \$66 - 85
- 8% \$86 - 99
- 69% \$100+

N=52

Comment: Most fees vary from \$46 to over \$100+, depending on materials, length of course, and the number of follow-up services required.

19) Is a separate fee charged for a follow-up? (*Check one*)

- 43% Yes
- 57% No

N=53

Comment: The average charge for a follow-up session was less than \$65

N=22

### III. PROGRAM SERVICE

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

(*Frequency*)

- 57 Cervical Mucus Method
- 23 Sympto-Thermal
- 58 Sympto-Hormonal Method
- 4 Other

N=62

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 32,897 individuals received some information/instruction on NFP.

N=57



- 22) How many individuals (couples count as two) in the diocese attended NFP class/instruction during the last twelve months?
- More than 9,223 individuals attended a class/instruction on NFP. N=47
- 23) Does the diocese have guidelines for marriage preparation?
- 94% Yes      6% No N=68
- 24) If the answer to question (23) was “Yes,” is NFP included in the guidelines for marriage preparation?
- 84% Yes      16% No N=64
- 25) On average, how much time is allowed for NFP education in marriage preparation programs? (*Give your best estimate*)
- 6%    0 minutes - 15 minutes  
14%   16 minutes - 30 minutes  
22%   31 minutes - 45 minutes  
24%   46 minutes - 1 hour  
34%   1 hour - 2 hours+ N=64
- 26) Does the (arch)diocese require an introductory session to NFP for the engaged?
- 43% Yes      57% No N=68
- 27) If the answer to question (26) is “Yes,” how much time is allotted to the required NFP introductory session?
- 13%   30 minutes  
16%   45 minutes  
55%   1 hour - 2 hours  
16%   No Response N=31
- 28) If the answer to question (26) is “Yes,” what is the content of the required NFP introductory session? (*Check all that apply*)  
(*Frequency*)
- 32    The appropriate Church teachings  
27    Reproductive anatomy and physiology  
34    Basic NFP science (e.g., *all the signs of fertility discussed*)  
28    Basic NFP methodology (e.g., an overview of all the specific NFP systems offered in your diocese)  
38    Benefits of NFP  
27    Contraindications of various contraceptives  
33    NFP witness talk N=44

29) Does the diocese require a full *course* in NFP for engaged couples? (*Check one*)  
13% Yes      87% No      *N=68*

30) Is the diocese moving toward mandating a full course of NFP instruction for engaged couples?  
21% Yes      79% No      *N=57*

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**Gratitude is extended to the following dioceses  
for participating in the 2019 Profile Report**

Albany, Amarillo, Archdiocese for the Atlanta, Baker, Birmingham, Boise, Buffalo, Burlington, Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburg, Camden, Charleston, Charlotte, Colorado Springs, Columbus, Crookston, Dallas, Detroit, Dubuque, El Paso, Evansville, Ft. Worth, Gary, Grand Island, Grand Rapids, Green Bay, Greensburg, Indianapolis, Jackson, Joliet, Kansas City (KS), Kansas City-St. Joseph (MO), La Crosse, Lafayette, Lansing, Lincoln, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Louisville, Madison, Military Services, USA, New Orleans, Newark, New York, Orange, Orlando, Owensboro, Palm Beach, Pensacola-Tallahassee, Peoria, Phoenix, Portland, Providence, Raleigh, Rapid City, Reno, Rochester, Savannah, Spokane, St. Cloud, St. Louis, St. Paul and Minneapolis, Steubenville, Superior, Syracuse, Trenton, Tulsa, Wichita, Winona, Worcester

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**Program Resources**

*Diocesan Plan for Natural Family Planning Program Development.* Washington, DC: Diocesan Development Program for NFP, 1981. (Available online at [usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/diocesan-ministry/upload/Diocesan-Plan.pdf](https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/natural-family-planning/diocesan-ministry/upload/Diocesan-Plan.pdf); orders, 1-866-582-0943.)

*Standards for Diocesan NFP Ministry.* Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. (Available online at [www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/standards-diocesan-nfp-ministry](https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/standards-diocesan-nfp-ministry).)

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