

DIOCESAN NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING MINISTRY
NATIONAL 2024 PROFILE REPORT

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM
Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth
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OVERVIEW

In January 2024, 196 dioceses were invited to participate in the annual *Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry National Profile* survey (*Profile*). Sixty-one questionnaires, or thirty-one percent, of dioceses participated in the 2024 *Profile* survey.

Since its creation, the *Profile* has served several essential functions. The aggregated data has provided insights into broad Natural Family Planning (NFP) programmatic trends and offered an annual overview of NFP efforts. This has enabled the NFP Program staff of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to develop suitable strategies and resources to support local diocesan NFP initiatives. Because the *Profile* offers individual profiles of individual diocesan NFP ministry, it has been a valuable tool for diocesan staff to annually record their information and statistics, allowing them to compare their data with national trends.

The *Profile* has monitored progress in dioceses working to include NFP in all pastoral education programs related to human sexuality, marriage, and family life. Despite long-standing efforts and valuable insights gained each year, the national landscape for Natural Family Planning (NFP) still shows both progress and ongoing challenges. Across dioceses, the implementation and focus on NFP vary widely. The reasons for this disparity are complex. Some dioceses have successfully integrated NFP instruction into their pastoral and educational outreach, while others struggle. Often, as one diocese increases its commitment to NFP education and funding, others face setbacks due to teacher turnover, budget constraints, and diocesan restructuring. Interestingly, some smaller dioceses have more extensive NFP programs with fewer resources than much larger dioceses.

Anecdotal evidence shows rapid growth in online resources and hybrid instructional models, enabling couples to access NFP education and support despite unprecedented challenges. Caution is advised with some online resources, as not all NFP materials are alike in methodology and content.

Since the survey began in 1990, respondents have repeatedly shown that NFP diocesan programs are strong where diocesan leadership emphasizes NFP—both publicly and financially. These supported programs tend to have: more comprehensive services; better integration into marriage preparation; and increased engagement among staff and participating couples. In short, when a bishop acknowledges NFP as a vital element of marriage ministry, NFP efforts flourish.

Finally, when evaluating any diocesan NFP program, the most crucial ongoing 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 the local diocesan NFP ministry.

SUMMARY

The following 2024 *Profile* summary of responses to crucial questions offers a broad overview of diocesan NFP ministry efforts across the United States. Since 1990, this *Diocesan NFP Profile Report* has identified a few positive national advances.

1. NFP education has shifted from being marginal to becoming a key part of diocesan marriage preparation efforts. Almost all dioceses now include some NFP education in their marriage preparation programs. Many dioceses have gradually enhanced both in the length and the quality of materials provided to couples preparing for marriage. This is a positive change.
2. Typically, NFP programs share funding, materials, and staff support from an umbrella department, such as the Marriage and Family Life Office. Thirty percent rely on paid part-time staff and volunteers. Only eleven percent have a full-time paid NFP coordinator.

NB: While budget constraints may require combining ministries, this often limits effectiveness (some ministries will be neglected). Ideally, NFP ministry should have a dedicated coordinator who serves as a key resource for pastoral education on human sexuality, chastity, fertility awareness, the value of children in marriage, and support for those facing infertility.

3. Limited funding continues to be a significant obstacle. Across the country, diocesan NFP programs are consistently underfunded. Of the dioceses surveyed, sixty-seven percent allocate less than \$5,000 for NFP programs—seventy-eight percent of all diocesan-funded NFP programs operate with budgets under \$10,000 annually. Only a small percentage of diocesan budgets (25%) exceed \$30,000. Most Diocesan NFP programs rely on indirect funding from other sources, such as NFP materials, donations from parishes, grants from local Knights of Columbus Councils, course instruction fees, and follow-up charges.
4. After an introduction to NFP, most couples do not complete a full course of NFP.

NB: A renewed national effort is necessary to help couples fully understand and embrace the Church's beautiful teaching on human sexuality and the value of procreation within marriage. More research is needed to understand this gap and tailor NFP programs to address this cultural challenge.

5. Fourteen responding dioceses have updated their marriage preparation guidelines to require couples to complete a comprehensive NFP course before getting married. Several years ago, only a few dioceses mandated a full NFP instructional course as part of marriage preparation, aside from just an introduction to NFP.

6. Most Diocesan marriage preparation programs aim to provide basic NFP information to various groups, with a special focus on couples preparing for marriage (e.g., booklets, fact sheets, witness-couple talks, and NFP course instruction). The time dedicated to NFP discussions has increased in most marriage preparation programs, from just a few minutes to more than two hours (71%).
 7. Major NFP providers and diocesan programs have adjusted their efforts to deliver NFP instruction and related informational resources online while continuing in-person instruction.
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I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- 1) The diocesan NFP Program is: *(Check one)*

96%	Part of the Office of Marriage and Family Life
0%	A service of our Catholic hospital(s)
0%	Part of Catholic Charities
4%	Its own department

N=52
- 2) Who is responsible for coordinating the NFP Ministry for the Diocese?

56%	Family Life Director
37%	NFP Coordinator
0%	Respect Life Director
7%	No person designated

N=54
- 3) For this position, NFP work is: *(Check one)*

60%	A part of full-time responsibilities
5%	Full-time, paid
1%	Full-time volunteer
18%	Part-time, paid
12%	Part-time volunteer

N=58
- 4) Is the NFP coordinator trained in NFP methodology? *(Check one)*

81% Yes	19% No
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N=56

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*)

54% Teacher 75% User 50% Promoter

N=48

NB: The fact that 54% of diocesan NFP coordinators are now teachers and 75% are users marks a significant shift. In the 1980s and 1990s, few practiced NFP or served as teachers. In those decades, the majority of diocesan NFP coordinators, who were also the directors of Marriage and Family Life offices, held graduate degrees in social work (e.g., MSW). Change began in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, as more directors were hired with graduate degrees in Catholic theology.

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

(*Frequency*)

- 10 Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)
- 2 Boston Cross-Check
- 16 Couple to Couple League (CCL)
- 20 Creighton Model *FertilityCare*TM
- 3 Family of the Americas Foundation
- 6 FEMM (Fertility Education Medical Management; a Sympto-Hormonal method)
- 7 Marquette University’s Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)
- 5 Sympto-Pro (a Sympto-Thermal method provided by Northwest Family Services)

N=45

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

- 60% Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We do not give them a stipend.
- 14% Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We give them a stipend to cover expenses.
- 8% We pay our NFP instructors (*part-time or full-time*).
- 18% The salaries/stipends for instructors are provided by other sources (*e.g., Catholic Hospital, Knights of Columbus, etc.*)

N=50

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

Total number of teachers: 726

The average number of teachers: 13

N=54

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

(*Frequency*)

28 Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)
38 Couple to Couple League (CCL)
42 Creighton Model *Fertility Care*TM
10 Family of the Americas Foundation
18 FEMM (Fertility Education Medical Management)
33 Marquette University Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)
11 Northwest Family Services (Sympto-Pro)

N=52

II. PROGRAM BUDGET

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

15% \$0
24% \$1 - 999
29% \$1,000 - 4,999
11% \$5,000 - 9,999
9% \$10,000 - 29,999
4% \$30,000 - 49,999
0% \$50,000 - 69,999
10% \$70,000+

N=55

- 11) Do you charge a fee for a full course in NFP? (*Check one*)

60% Yes 40% No

N=55

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

8% \$0
0% \$1 - 25
6% \$26 - 45
6% \$46 - 65
6% \$66 - 85
8% \$86 - 100
66% \$101+

N=35

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

III. PROGRAM SERVICE

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

(*Frequency*)

28	Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)	
41	Couple to Couple League (CCL)	
40	Creighton Model <i>Fertility Care</i> TM	
0	Family of the Americas	
18	FEMM (Fertility Education Medical Management; Sympto-Hormonal Method)	
32	Marquette University's Institute of NFP (Marquette Method)	
1	Standard Day Method (a calculation method)	
13	Sympto-Pro (a Sympto-Thermal method provided by Northwest Family Services)	
1	Two-Day Method (a cervical mucus-based method)	
4	Other	N=52

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

A total of 26,496 individuals received some information/instruction on NFP.

N=49

- 15) How many individuals (couples count as two) in the diocese attended a full course (both on-site and online or distance learning) in NFP during the last twelve months?

A total of 10,783 individuals attended a class/instruction on NFP.

N=44

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

3%	0 minutes - 15 minutes
9%	16 minutes - 30 minutes
17%	31 minutes - 45 minutes
22%	46 minutes - 1 hour
49%	1 hour - 2 hours+

N=59

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

14 Yes 45 No

N=59

**Gratitude is extended to the following dioceses
for participating in the 2024 Profile Report**

Arlington, Atlanta, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boise, Brownsville, Charleston, Charlotte, Cheyenne, Cincinnati, Columbus, Corpus Christi, Crookston, Denver, Detroit, Dodge City, Dubuque, Gary, Harrisburg, Honolulu, Indianapolis, Kansas City (KS), Lacrosse, Lafayette, Laredo, Lincoln, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Louisville, Manchester, Miami, Milwaukee, Nashville, Norwich, Orange, Orlando, Palm Beach, Pensacola-Tallahassee, Phoenix, Pueblo, Rockford, Sacramento, Saginaw, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Shreveport, Sioux Falls, Springfield (IL), Springfield-Cape Girardeau, St. Augustine, St. Cloud, St. Louis, St. Paul-Minneapolis, Steubenville, Syracuse, Trenton, Tulsa, Tylar, Washington, Wichita, Winona-Rochester

Program Resources

The following documents help strengthen 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 usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/standards.cfm.)

To view information about requiring a full course of NFP in marriage preparation, see <https://www.usccb.org/topics/natural-family-planning/nfp-program-topics-resources>

For additional resources and useful information see <https://www.usccb.org/nfp>.

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