

DIOCESAN NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING MINISTRY
NATIONAL 2020 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 2021, 196 dioceses were invited to participate in the annual *Diocesan Natural Family Planning Ministry National Profile (Profile)* survey. Forty-seven questionnaires, or twenty-four percent, were returned for the 2020 *Profile* survey.

NOTE: Due to the disruption of the world-wide pandemic of COVID-19, many dioceses were unable to report their 2020 NFP program numbers.

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 appropriate strategies and supportive resources to support local diocesan NFP efforts. Because the *Profile* provides individual portraits of the diocesan NFP ministry, it is also an excellent tool for diocesan staff to annually capture their information/statistics to compare with national trends.

Over three decades the *Profile* has captured great strides in diocesan efforts to integrate NFP into all pastoral educational efforts treating human sexuality, marriage, and family life. At the same time, unevenness remains in NFP efforts across the country. Given the range of pastoral circumstances, NFP programs continue to vary in availability and viability from diocese to diocese. The underlying reasons for this unevenness are complex. Frequently 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 efforts. It is worth noting, some modest dioceses have more robust NFP programs with fewer resources than dioceses of much greater size.

Since the survey began (1990), respondents have stated repeatedly 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.

After thirty years of reporting NFP efforts, the *Profile* will be redesigned to capture new approaches and formats that effectively deliver NFP education and evolving NFP methodology. The future is promising and at the same time, challenging.

The following 2020 *Profile* summary of responses to crucial questions gives a broad view of the diocesan NFP ministry 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. The majority of dioceses have increased steadily the length of time and quality of materials offered to couples preparing for marriage.
2. Limited funding has been and continues to be 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 indirect funding collected from other sources (e.g., NFP materials, donations from parishes, grants from local Knights of Columbus Councils, a fee for course instruction, and follow-up fees).
3. In the annual diocesan budget, most dioceses do not identify dedicated funds for the 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.
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. Following an introduction to NFP, most couples did not take a full course of NFP. 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.
7. Seven of the responding dioceses require couples to take a full NFP course of instruction before marriage. Several years ago, few dioceses required a full course of NFP instruction as part of marriage preparation efforts.¹ 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 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

¹ See, *Profile Report*, Q.30 and *Requiring a Full Course of NFP Instruction in Marriage Preparation—a Report* (September 2008) available at: usccb.org/nfp/diocesan-ministry/nfp-topics-and-resources.cfm.

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 significantly from a few minutes to over two hours.

9. Although largely anecdotal, the world-wide pandemic of Covid-19 has prompted major NFP providers and diocesan programs to adopt online formats to deliver NFP and instruction.

Additional Comments:

Since 1990, this *Diocesan NFP Profile Report* has identified a few positive national advances, notably moving NFP education from the periphery to an essential element of the diocesan marriage preparation ministry. As stated previously, nationally, there is a great need within all levels of catechesis to substantially integrate a more sophisticated understanding of human sexuality and the nature of marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood among the faithful. Such catechesis 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 and the gift of life.

Today, most couples preparing for marriage, and married couples themselves, barely 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. The contraceptive mentality has permeated contemporary culture. It is difficult for many couples to know why modern methods of NFP are different from contraception. This lack of understanding reveals a severe problem that begs for a solution. 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), nature of marriage, conjugal love and responsible parenthood, and the value of children. In such diocesan NFP programs, 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 get the NFP support they need?* The answer to this question will determine how best to plan and support the local diocesan NFP ministry.

I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

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

- 91% Part of the office of Marriage and Family Life
- 0% A service of one of our Catholic hospital(s)
- 4% Part of Catholic Charities
- 5% Its own department

N=43

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

- 63% Diocesan NFP Coordinator
- 34% Family Life Director
- 0% Respect Life Director
- 3% No person designated

N=41

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 nearly eight years, with a combined total of 345 years of experience.

N=45

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

- 52% Part of full-time responsibilities
- 11% Full-time, paid
- 0% Full-time volunteer
- 28% Part-time, paid
- 9% Part-time, volunteer

N=46

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

- 78% Yes
- 22% No

N=46

- 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*)

20 Teacher 33 User 19 Promoter *N*=36

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

The average teaching experience is 15.5 years. *N*=20

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

(*Frequency*)

9 Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)
15 Creighton Model *FertilityCare*TM Center
4 Family of the Americas Foundation
15 Couple to Couple League (CCL)
2 Northwest Family Services
4 Marquette University’s Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)
5 Other, e.g., Diocesan teacher training program

N=36

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

Total number of teachers: 740

The average number of teachers: 15

N=47

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

44% Most of our NFP instructors are volunteers. We do not give them a stipend.

20% 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*).

29% The salaries/stipends for instructors are provided by other sources (*e.g., Catholic Hospital, Knights of Columbus, etc.*)

N=45

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

(*Frequency*)

- 20 Billings Ovulation Method Association (BOMA)
- 32 Couple to Couple League (CCL)
- 33 Creighton Model FertilityCare™ Center
- 12 Family of the Americas Foundation
- 17 Marquette University's Institute of NFP (Marquette Model)
- 20 Northwest Family Services
- 9 Diocesan Teacher Training Program

N=43

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

37% Yes 63% No

N=46

II. PROGRAM BUDGET

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

- 5 \$0
- 12 \$1 - 999
- 10 \$1,000 - 4,999
- 0 \$5,000 - 9,999
- 6 \$10,000 - 29,999
- 3 \$30,000 - 49,999
- 2 \$50,000 - 69,999
- 5 \$70,000+

N=43

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

- 19% \$0
- 31% \$1 - 999
- 17% \$1,000 - 4,999
- 2% \$5,000 - 9,999
- 12% \$10,000 - 29,999
- 7% \$30,000 - 49,999
- 2% \$50,000 - 69,999
- 10% \$70,000+

N=42

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

59%	\$0	
17%	\$1- 999	
5%	\$1,000 - 4,999	
2%	\$5,000 - 9,999	
17%	\$10,000+	N=41

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

32% Yes	68% No	N=38
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Comment: In over 80% 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=10

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

81% Yes	19% No	N=43
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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*)

23%	Diocesan NFP staff determines fees
57%	Individual NFP provider determines fees
20%	Combination of diocesan staff and individual NFP provider determine fees

N=35

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

9%	\$0	
0%	\$1 - 25	
6%	\$26 - 45	
3%	\$46 - 65	
6%	\$66 - 85	
6%	\$86 - 100	
71%	\$101+	N=35

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

- 19) Is a separate fee charged for a follow-up? (*Check one*)
- 38% Yes 62% No *N=39*

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

N=12

III. PROGRAM SERVICE

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

(*Frequency*)

- 38 Cervical Mucus Method
- 21 Sympto-Thermal
- 41 Sympto-Hormonal Method
- 1 Other *N=45*

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

A total 14,691 individuals received some information/instruction on NFP.

N=38

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

A total 6,177 individuals attended a class/instruction on NFP.

N=33

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

94% Yes 6% No *N=47*

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

95% Yes 5% No *N=44*

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

7%	0 minutes - 15 minutes	
9%	16 minutes - 30 minutes	
22%	31 minutes - 45 minutes	
22%	46 minutes - 1 hour	
40%	1 hour - 2 hours+	N=45

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

57% Yes	43% No	N=47
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27) If the answer to question (26) is “Yes,” how much time is allotted to the required NFP introductory session?

0%	30 minutes	
25%	45 minutes	
75%	1 hour - 2 hours	N=28

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	
25	Reproductive anatomy & physiology	
38	Basic NFP science (e.g., <i>all the signs of fertility discussed</i>)	
29	Basic NFP methodology (e.g., an overview of all the specific NFP systems offered in your diocese)	
31	Benefits of NFP	
22	Contraindications of various contraceptives	
32	NFP witness talk	N=36

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

15% Yes	85% No	N=46
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30) Is the diocese moving toward mandating a full course of NFP instruction for engaged couples?

30% Yes	70% No	N=40
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**Gratitude is extended to the following dioceses
for participating in the *2020 Profile Report***

Arlington, Atlanta, Baltimore, Bismarck, Burlington, Charleston, Charlotte, Cheyenne, Cleveland, Colorado Springs, Columbus, Detroit, Evansville, Grand Island, Greensburg, Indianapolis, Joliet, Kalamazoo, Kansas City-St. Joseph, La Crosse, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Metuchen, Miami, Milwaukee, Nashville, Norwich, Orange, Orlando, Palm Beach, Phoenix, Raleigh, Rochester, Rockford, St. Cloud, St. Louis, Salina, Salt Lake City, San Jose, Savannah, Seattle, Steubenville, Trenton, Wichita, Winona

Program Resources

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

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