

New Directions for FOCCUS Use
Archdiocese of Baltimore Marriage Preparation Programs
2009

ALL FOCCUS SCORING IS NOW DONE ONLINE

Due to policy changes by the FOCCUS, Inc. the Archdiocese now must purchase in advance and set up a FOCCUS scoring session for each couple in every marriage preparation program. *This replaces the scanner process that read the pencil marks on the answer sheets.*

FOCCUS REPORT DESIGN -- UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The design of the FOCCUS report is direct from the FOCCUS webpage. We have requested the following improvements - larger text, fewer pages, un-shaded tables, and a one-page graph. We hope that these suggestions will be implemented soon. FOCCUS is currently working on making it more readable. We apologize for any difficulties you may encounter in the meantime.

COUPLES MAY TAKE FOCCUS ON-LINE ON THEIR OWN COMPUTERS

Log-on information is emailed to each person, and results are delivered to the FOCCUS facilitator (sponsor couple, priest or deacon) by email. No more lost or delayed mail!

MORE QUALITY PROGRAM TIME

Having the couples take FOCCUS online at home after the first meeting allows time for additional discussion, prayer, presentations, or private couple sharing during your time with the couple. Consider using and discussing the "Personality Survey," included in each couple packet.

WON'T THE COUPLE DISCUSS THEIR RESPONSES?

FOCCUS recognizes that this issue is a concern. Please counsel the partners to complete the FOCCUS inventory independently. They should discuss the experience AFTER they have submitted their responses.

FOCCUS IS A DISCUSSION TOOL

Please urge each person to make the most of the FOCCUS experience. If they understand that FOCCUS is only a discussion tool to help them communicate better, they are more likely to respond to the statements authentically. If they do compare their responses, they are at least discussing topics important to their marriage. Discussion is more important than the "score".

EXPERIENCE SHOWS COUPLES DON'T CHEAT

The Archdiocese of Chicago has about 80% of couples take FOCCUS on-line, and they report little evidence of couples matching their answers. FOCCUS' studies have found that at least one partner is very invested in learning what the other thinks about the issues.

NEED TO ADMINISTER FOCCUS ON PAPER?

FOCCUS on paper will be available to administer FOCCUS to a couple. However, this process will take more time to be processed. Please complete NEW yellow FOCCUS APPLICATION FORM and send it with the completed answer sheets. Please follow fax directions on the application form. Our hope is to make the online process standard.

ANSWER SHEETS -- BY REQUEST

Beginning January 2009, answer sheets will not be included in the packets unless you request them when placing your order for materials. If a couple will not have access to computers, use the paper version.

ONE FOCCUS PER PACKET

Only one FOCCUS session per Marriage Preparation packet is permitted since the online FOCCUS session is pre-paid. The couple must either take the FOCCUS on-line or on paper, but not both.

ALL COUPLES MUST APPLY TO TAKE THE FOCCUS

Please complete the NEW yellow FOCCUS APPLICATION FORM which is included in each Sponsor Couple packet. If you have an older packet with no FOCCUS application form, please call our office to apply for a couple to take the FOCCUS online.

ADMINISTERING FOCCUS IN A GROUP

FOCCUS, Inc. no longer recommends that FOCCUS be discussed in a group setting. We understand that a brief glance at the scores in a public situation can lead to misunderstandings and impede communication. We want to comply with these instructions, although we recognize that this new procedure differs from past practice of returning the results to the Pre-Cana leader for use during the group program.

In light of these revised instructions by FOCCUS, Inc., Pre-Cana programs will continue to administer the FOCCUS. However, we will now send the results directly to the priest or deacon (or other facilitator designated by him) who will facilitate a private discussion with the couple about their responses.

FOCCUS is a valuable tool for marriage preparation. Please bear with us as we develop these new procedures. We want to use it in the best way possible. We welcome your insights and suggestions for improvement.

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

On for following pages, please find two sets of detailed directions for Sponsor Couples and Pre-Cana leaders.

HOW THE NEW FOCCUS WORKS IN THE SPONSOR COUPLE PROGRAM

1. Receive couple packet from parish marriage preparation coordinator.
2. When you meet the couple for the first time, please explain the FOCCUS to them.
3. At that time, assure the couple that FOCCUS is not a test, cannot be used to determine whether or not they can get married, and will not be saved after the marriage preparation process.
4. DO encourage the couple to begin to discuss their responses AFTER they have submitted them.
5. Explain that the comparison of their responses will be emailed to you to discuss with them.
6. Have the couple complete the NEW yellow FOCCUS Application included in each couple packet.
7. The new yellow FOCCUS form asks for email addresses for each partner and an email address for the facilitator (or the address at which the report will be printed out).
8. If the parish still has packets in stock, please supply this information on the old yellow "counselor card".
- 9. Steps 1-8 could be done over the phone with the couple.**
10. Send the FOCCUS Application to our office. For faster service, fax, email or phone in the information.
11. Upon receipt of the FOCCUS Application, an online FOCCUS session will be arranged for the couple.
12. Our office will email each person his/her User IDs and passwords and instructions for logging on. *
*The log-on information may be sent to the sponsor couple to distribute to the engaged couple.
13. The couple logs on to the FOCCUS website and responds to the FOCCUS inventory.
14. Ask the couple to call you to set up the next session AFTER they have submitted the FOCCUS.
15. Results are automatically tabulated, and we email them to you, the FOCCUS facilitator.
16. Sponsor Couples may request that the report be emailed to your parish office (or the recipient of their choice) for printing. Please clear this with the recipient and request confidentiality.
17. Meet with the couple to facilitate discussion on the different FOCCUS categories. Utilize couple worksheets and other packet resources, a few categories at each session.
18. Assign activities for discussion between sessions.
19. At the last meeting, guide couples in setting goals for future communication. Use *FOCCUS for the Future*, if desired. Destroy the FOCCUS printout.
20. Have couple complete pink program Evaluation and send to your parish sponsor couple coordinator.
21. Issue Certificate of Completion for the couple to give to their priest/deacon.
22. The couple should make an appointment to meet with their priest/deacon. If he expects to receive the FOCCUS, please have the couple ask him to call our office to request a copy.

HOW THE NEW FOCCUS WORKS IN THE PARISH PRE-CANA PROGRAM

1. Order Pre-Cana folders from our office.
2. When you meet the couples for the first time, please explain the FOCCUS to them.
3. At that time, assure the couple that FOCCUS is not a test, cannot be used to determine whether or not they can get married, and will not be saved after the marriage preparation process.
4. DO encourage them to begin to discuss their responses AFTER they have submitted them.
5. Explain that the comparison of their responses will be emailed to the facilitator -- usually the priest or deacon who is preparing them for marriage (or his delegate) -- who will help them discuss issues of importance to them.
6. Have each couple complete the yellow FOCCUS application form from their couple packet. If the couple does not know their priest's email address, they must at least provide contact information for his parish.
7. Send all yellow FOCCUS application forms to our office.
8. We will arrange an online FOCCUS session for each person.
9. Our office will email each person his or her User IDs and passwords and log-in instructions upon receipt of the FOCCUS Application forms
10. The couple logs on and responds to the FOCCUS inventory.
11. Before your program ends, please remind couples to complete and submit their FOCCUS responses.
12. Results are automatically tabulated, and we email them to the FOCCUS facilitator (priest/deacon/sponsor couple).
13. Couples should make an appointment to discuss the results with the priest or deacon who will preside at their wedding. He will receive the FOCCUS report and directions for discussing it with the couple.
14. Proceed with program presentations, using worksheets and other packet resources.
15. Have couple complete program Evaluations and send to program coordinator.
16. Issue Certificate of Completion.

COMMENTS or QUESTIONS

please call Lauri Przybysz 410-547-5420 lprzybysz@archbalt.org