

St. Raphael's Parish
FOCCUS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

1. What is FOCCUS?

FOCCUS is a 156-item instrument with additional sections for interfaith, cohabiting, and remarrying couples. It is not a test, but is an inventory designed to help couples learn more about themselves and their relationship. The inventory is similar in style to standardized instruments you may have taken – you fill in the circles of your answer sheet, which is then scored by a computer with a scanner.

2. Why does St. Raphael's use FOCCUS?

St. Raphael's primary concern is that you have the best possible start for your marriage. FOCCUS is a tool that provides you with information about the way you relate to each other, communicate, and solve problems. It also helps pinpoint issues from your family or your faith tradition that might need to be discussed during this pre-marriage period. When it is used in conjunction with Pre-Cana and meetings with members of the parish staff, FOCCUS points to your relationship issues – things you need to talk about and work out before you marry.

3. When do we take the FOCCUS instrument?

The best time to take FOCCUS is immediately after you've had your first meeting with the priest or deacon witnessing your marriage. It is very important to take it before you begin your Pre-Cana sessions, because FOCCUS helps lay the foundation for your conversations during Pre-Cana. The more time you give yourselves to digest the results of FOCCUS and discuss them with your fiancé(e), the more helpful it will be to you.

4. How is FOCCUS related to Pre-Cana?

We like to see FOCCUS as a road map for Pre-Cana. When couples complete the FOCCUS inventory, they have a tool to help them identify areas that need discussion in their Pre-Cana sessions. For example, if your completed FOCCUS instrument indicates that you have differences in your approach to money, you'll know that's an area where you may need some extra conversation or some help working out your differences. You may even find some issues that you have never discussed. FOCCUS highlights these areas, giving you another way to facilitate open conversation in the Pre-Cana sessions.

5. Who sees our completed FOCCUS instrument?

The FOCCUS instrument is scored by the FOCCUS coordinator, and then is sent to a specially trained couple who will help you interpret your results. This couple has completed diocesan training on FOCCUS, and is skilled in helping you understand what your results mean. They will forward any comments back to the person who is witnessing your marriage so that he will be able to assist you with any additional questions.

6. How long is the completed FOCCUS instrument retained?

FOCCUS cannot predict the future, and it may not even provide an accurate picture of you or your relationship 5 years from now. It is intended to give you a snapshot of your relationship at the present time. Once it does that, its usefulness is limited. We will destroy the completed FOCCUS instruments when we weed our wedding files each year.

7. If I have other questions about FOCCUS, whom do I call?

- a. The FOCCUS coordinator at St. Raphael's is Dr. Joann Heaney-Hunter. If you have any questions about administration, scoring, or interpretation of FOCCUS, you can contact her at St. Raphael's – (516) 785-0236 or at jheaneyhunter@straphaelparish.org.