

Genetic Counselor

■ Job Description

Genetic counselors work as members of a health care team, providing information and support to individuals and families with histories of birth defects or familial genetic disorders and to families who may be at risk for a variety of inherited conditions. They identify families at risk, investigate the problem present in the family, interpret information about the disorder, analyze inheritance patterns and risks of recurrence and review available options with the family.

Genetic counselors also provide supportive counseling, serve as patient advocates, and refer individuals and families to community or state support services. They serve as educators and resource people for other health care professionals and for the general public. Some counselors also work in administrative capacities. Many engage in research activities related to the field of medical genetics and genetic counseling.

■ Job Settings

Most genetic counselors work in university medical centers, private hospitals, and medical facilities. Some are employed by managed care organizations, diagnostic laboratories, federal and state government offices, public health agencies, private practice, and outreach clinics.

■ Projected Need

The genetic counseling profession is rapidly expanding and diversifying. Heightened public awareness, coupled with scientific advances in adult disorders and reproductive technologies, have increased the demand for genetic counselors in clinical, teaching, administrative, commercial, private practice and consulting environments.

■ Salaries

According to the National Society of Genetic Counselors survey of members, genetic counselors with master's degrees received a mean (average) salary of \$42,915 per year. Entry-level salaries were as low as \$23,575, but after a few years experience, salaries increased to just over \$30,000. Counselors with 10 to 15 years of experience received an average salary of \$53,272 per year.

■ Related Careers

Physician, biological scientist, clinical psychologist, and public health

■ Differences in Training

A minimum of a master's degree in genetic counseling (or in a closely related field of study) is required. Most commonly, genetic counselors enter master's degree programs in genetic counseling with undergraduate degrees in biology/biosciences, psychology, genetics, or nursing. Twenty-five training programs in the United States offer master's degrees in genetic counseling. In Illinois, training is available at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago.

■ Related Educational Programs

The programs of study listed below are the recommended areas of study to pursue for this occupation. Clicking on these will lead to files that show in-state and national schools that offer these programs.

The following link(s) will take you to CIS for more information. CIS requires an ID and password that can be obtained at <http://cis.ilworkinfo.com/loginhelp/login.asp>

[Genetic Counseling](#)
[Human and Medical Genetics](#)

■ Credentials

To be certified as a genetic counselor, the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC) requires a graduate degree in genetic counseling, clinical experience in an ABGC-approved training site or sites, a log book of 50 supervised cases and the successful completion of a comprehensive ABGC certification exam.

■ Resources

American Board of Genetic Counseling
9650 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20814-3998
Phone: 301.634.7316
E-mail: srobinson@genetics.faseb.org
<http://www.abgc.net>

National Society of Genetic Counselors
233 Canterbury Drive
Wallingford, PA 19086-6617
Phone: 610.872.7608

E-mail: FYI@nsgc.org

<http://www.nsgc.org>

Click on "Career" in the left side bar.