Genetic counselors provide information and support to individuals and families who have concerns about birth defects or genetic conditions. The genetic counselor acts as a liaison between families and medical professionals. The genetic counselor communicates information about causes, implications and recurrence risks and provides appropriate psychosocial support to help families make decision and to make the best possible adjustments to difficult circumstances.
Degree

Usually master's degree from accredited program. Certification in genetic counseling is available by the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC). Requirements include documentation of the following: a graduate degree in genetic counseling, clinical experience in an ABGC-approved training site or sites, a log book of 50 supervised cases, and successful completion of both the general and specialty certification examination.

Program Length

2-3 years

Professional Schools' Organization

Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC)
American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC)
Genetic Counseling Graduate School Programs
Genetic Counseling Training Programs Accredited by the ACGC
National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC)

Application Service

None

Academic Admission Requirements

Bachelor's degree in biology, chemistry, psychology, social work, nursing, or a related field, and work or volunteer experience in a counseling/helping environment.

Admission Exam

Usually GRE

Personal Attributes & Experiences

Genetic counselors are health professionals with specialized graduate Degrees and experience in the areas of medical genetics and counseling. Most enter the field from a variety of disciplines, including biology, genetics, nursing, psychology, public health and social work. They work as members of a health care team, providing information and support to families who have members with birth defects or 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 to families, 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.

Recommendation Letters

As specified by individual school.