

Why License Genetic Counselors in Texas?

Genetic counselors are highly trained healthcare professionals who help patients and physicians understand medically important genetic information. Over 30,000 Texans benefit from the services provided by genetic counselors each year.¹

Over 1,000 new genetic diseases have been identified in the last 10 years alone.

- 1 in every 9 pediatric hospital admissions is for a child with a genetic disorder.²
- 50% of all intellectual disability has a genetic basis.³
- 15% of all cancer has a genetic link.⁴
- 10% of chronic disease (heart disease, diabetes, arthritis) has a significant genetic component.⁵
- Genetic counselors provide patient care in areas including oncology, cardiology, obstetrics, pediatrics, and neurology. They deliver expertise within diagnostic laboratories and academic settings, and they offer consultative services and formal education for physicians and other healthcare workers.

However, in Texas there are no enforceable standards for genetic counselor training, practice or continuing education. While the prerequisites for national certification include appropriate academic and clinical education, it is not required in Texas. Licensing genetic counselors helps ensure accountability and quality of care by:

Protecting patients from harm caused by receiving inaccurate information about genetic risks from people who do not meet minimum education and certification standards

- Numerous cases of physical, psychological, or financial harm due to the inappropriate use or interpretation of genetic information in Texas have been documented.^{6,7}
- Approximately 30% of non-genetics healthcare providers misinterpret the results of genetic tests that have been ordered on their patients.⁸

Saving healthcare dollars through better informed testing on appropriate individuals

- Healthcare providers without genetics training often order more expensive genetic tests than what is needed, resulting in unnecessary healthcare spending.⁹
- Insurance companies are starting to require genetic counseling prior to authorizing payment for genetic testing because of demonstrated cost-saving effects.

Providing an accountability mechanism for reporting, investigating and sanctioning claims of incompetent, unethical and/or unlawful behavior of a genetic counselor

- In the absence of regulation, there are no professional consequences for practicing outside of guidelines. Without regulation, incompetent genetic counselors can continue to practice, leaving Texas families vulnerable.

