

Genetic Counselor

Read a family's DNA results, then sit with them and explain what it means for their lives.

TYPICAL PAY

\$100,040

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$78k to \$139k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

6 to 7 years

after high school

DEMAND

Very high

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Hospitals, cancer centers, testing labs, telehealth companies

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Biology, chemistry and statistics. Volunteer somewhere that puts you in front of people having a hard day.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
 Biology, genetics, psychology or public health are common. You need genetics, biochemistry and statistics courses plus counseling or crisis-line experience.
- 3 Apply through the admissions match** One application cycle
 Programs and applicants rank each other and a computer pairs them, the way medical residencies work. Many people apply twice.
- 4 Master's degree** 2 years
 A program accredited by the ACGC (Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling). Classroom genetics plus supervised clinical rotations and a research project.
- 5 Certification and license** After graduation
 Pass the board exam from the ABGC (American Board of Genetic Counseling) to become a certified genetic counselor, then apply to your state.

Pros and cons

- + Six figures on a two-year master's degree
- + Predictable hours and very little night work
- + Remote and telehealth jobs are genuinely available
- Admission is competitive and some people apply two or three times
- You deliver bad news regularly and it accumulates
- Insurance and prior authorization paperwork eats real hours

Good to know

It is a tiny profession

The federal survey counted about 4,000 genetic counselors working in the United States in 2024, with roughly 300 openings a year. For comparison, there are more than 3 million registered nurses. Small fie...

The whole profession started at one college

The first master's program in genetic counseling opened at Sarah Lawrence College in New York in 1969. Every accredited program in the country traces back to that single class.

Optional boosts

Prenatal. Cancer. Pediatric. Cardiovascular and neurology.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Genetic Counselors (29-9092.00)

O*NET OnLine: Genetic Counselors, employment and outlook

American Board of Genetic Counseling

Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling: accredited programs

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/genetic-counselor>



Scan for the full clicker