



ASHG Statement of Support for Licensure of Genetic Counselors

September 10, 2015

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) supports state licensure of certified genetic counselors to help ensure that the public has access to genetic and genomic services provided by qualified health professionals.

ASHG is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. The Society's nearly 8,000 members include researchers, academicians, clinicians, laboratory practice professionals, genetic counselors, nurses and others who have a special interest in human genetics. Our members work in a wide range of settings, including universities, hospitals, institutes, biotech companies, the pharmaceutical industry, and medical and research laboratories. Many of those settings employ genetic counselors – health professionals with specialized graduate degrees and training in medical genetics, genomics, and counseling. Although genetic counselors often are members of a healthcare team in a medical setting, their training and expertise allow independent interaction with patients.

Healthcare reform and the rapidly expanding role of genomics in many healthcare decisions will increase the demand for qualified genetics professionals. State licensure of certified counselors will help to ensure that the healthcare system has a qualified workforce to provide genetic and genomic services for the growing number of patients and families who need them

Many health plans recognize genetic counselors as important members of the healthcare team and depend on them to help ensure provision of state-of-the art genetic services, including the ordering of appropriate genetic/genomic tests and the attendant pre- and post-test counseling and education. Licensure also provides genetic counselors with the credentials many hospitals need to approve billing and reimbursement for services.

ASHG supports licensure already enacted by more than twenty states and encourages the remaining states to license certified genetic counselors as one way to increase access to high-quality genetic/genomic services across the country.