

Genetic Counselors

SOC: 29-9092 • Career Profile Report

■ Key Facts

\$98,910 Median Salary	4,000 Employment	+9.0% Growth Rate
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■ Requirements & Salary Range

Education: Master's degree

■ Automation Risk Assessment

Low Risk - 8.0% probability of being automated in the next 10-20 years.
This job is relatively safe from automation due to its creative, social, or complex problem-solving requirements.

■ Work-Life Balance

8.7/10 - Excellent work-life balance

■ Personality Fit (RIASEC)

Higher scores indicate better personality fit for this career type.

Realistic	5.4/10	Investigative	8.6/10
Artistic	4.8/10	Social	9.0/10
Enterprising	5.4/10	Conventional	6.2/10

■ Top Skills Required

Communication skills, Compassion, Critical-thinking skills, Interpersonal skills, Organizational skills

✓ Strengths

- High Demand
- Flexible Work
- Continuous Learning

■ Challenges

- Burnout Risk
- Rapid Technological Change

■ What They Do

Genetic Counselors are healthcare professionals who help individuals and families **understand how genetics affects health, disease risk, and medical decisions**. They interpret genetic test results, assess inherited conditions, and guide patients through complex information with clarity and compassion. Their work supports informed choices about screening, treatment, family planning, and preventive care.

This career is well suited for individuals who enjoy science, counseling, and translating complex medical information into meaningful guidance for patients.

What Do Genetic Counselors Do?

Genetic counselors combine clinical knowledge with counseling skills to support patients before and after genetic testing. Their responsibilities emphasize education, risk assessment, and ethical practice.

Common responsibilities include:

- Collecting and analyzing personal and family medical histories
- Assessing the risk of inherited conditions or genetic disorders
- Explaining genetic testing options, benefits, and limitations
- Interpreting and communicating test results in understandable terms
- Providing emotional support and counseling to patients and families
- Collaborating with physicians and healthcare teams
- Maintaining detailed and confidential medical records

Areas of Specialization

Genetic counselors may specialize based on patient population or medical focus:

- Prenatal and Reproductive Genetics: Assess genetic risks during pregnancy or family planning.
- Cancer Genetics: Evaluate inherited cancer risk and guide screening decisions.
- Pediatric Genetics: Support families of children with genetic or developmental conditions.
- Cardiovascular Genetics: Address inherited heart-related disorders.
- Neurogenetics: Focus on genetic conditions affecting the nervous system.
- Laboratory or Research Genetics: Support testing interpretation and research efforts.

Skills and Abilities Needed

Genetic counselors blend scientific expertise with interpersonal sensitivity.

Core Professional Skills

Personal Qualities That Matter

Education and Licensure Pathway

Becoming a genetic counselor requires specialized graduate education and certification:

- Bachelor's Degree: In biology, genetics, psychology, or a related field
- Master's Degree: In genetic counseling from an accredited program
- Clinical Training: Supervised patient-facing experience during graduate study
- Certification: Board certification required for most roles
- State Licensure (where applicable): Required in some states
- Continuing Education: Ongoing learning to stay current with genetic science

Where Do Genetic Counselors Work?

Genetic counselors are employed across healthcare, research, and diagnostic settings:

- Hospitals and Medical Centers
- Specialty Clinics (oncology, prenatal, pediatrics)
- Genetic Testing and Diagnostic Laboratories
- Physician Offices and Health Systems
- Research Institutions and Universities
- Telehealth and Remote Counseling Services

How Much Do Genetic Counselors Earn?

Earnings vary based on experience, specialization, and work setting:

- Entry-Level Genetic Counselors: Typically earn strong professional starting salaries
- Experienced or Specialized Counselors: Often earn higher pay in oncology or laboratory roles
- Senior or Leadership Positions: May earn more with supervisory or program management duties

Compensation often includes healthcare benefits and professional development support.

Is This Career Difficult?

Genetic counseling is intellectually rigorous and emotionally demanding. Professionals must stay current with rapidly evolving genetic science while supporting patients through sensitive and sometimes life-altering information. The challenge lies in balancing scientific accuracy, ethical considerations, and compassionate care.

Who Should Consider Becoming a Genetic Counselor?

This career may be a strong fit if you:

- Enjoy biology, genetics, and medical science
- Are comfortable discussing complex and sensitive topics
- Have strong communication and counseling skills
- Value patient-centered, ethical healthcare
- Want a growing career at the intersection of science and care

How to Prepare Early

- Take advanced courses in biology, genetics, and psychology
- Develop strong communication and listening skills
- Volunteer or work in healthcare or counseling settings
- Gain exposure to genetics labs or research programs
- Research accredited genetic counseling graduate programs

Genetic counselors empower patients and families by transforming complex genetic information into clear, compassionate guidance that supports informed health decisions across generations.