**Overview:** An evaluation of the core and additional professional skills of genetic counselors, as surveyed within the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) in 2008-2009, identified six key areas of skills possessed by genetic counselors as a result of training and experience that translate to a variety of work settings, and when taken together, differentiate genetic counselors from other health professionals.

Genetic counseling, traditionally, is a clinical service performed by master’s degree trained professionals educated at accredited genetic counseling training programs. A clinic-based genetic counselor will typically have patient and health team oriented skills including those outlined by the American Board of Genetic Counseling as “core competencies” in the domains of: Communication; Critical Thinking; Interpersonal, Counseling and Psychosocial Assessment; and Professional Ethics and Values.

Current and future projections suggest that the skills of genetic counselors translate into other areas, beyond the traditional face-to-face patient counseling session. The NSGC Core Skills Task Force (CSTF) was established to clarify the core skills of genetic counselors and elucidate potential additional skills for use in the promotion of the genetic counseling profession and genetic counselor education offerings.

The CSTF reviewed reference materials and conducted telephone interviews with genetic counselors practicing in expanded roles and both clinical and non-clinical settings. This research produced a listing of core and additional genetic counseling skills (a comprehensive skill chart is attached). In summary, the Task Force identified six key areas of skills that are translatable to a variety of work settings and, taken together, differentiate genetic counselors from other health professionals. Detail on these skills and how genetic counselors use these skills to benefit potential employers and audiences is below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Skills of Genetic Counselors</th>
<th>Benefits of Skill to employer/audience</th>
<th>Examples of these skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep and broad knowledge of genetics</td>
<td>Improve quality of services/products</td>
<td>Broad range of specialty areas where GCs practice (prenatal risk assessment; pediatric and adult diagnosis; pre-symptomatic risk assessment for hereditary and common disease)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to tailor, translate and communicate complex information in a simple, relevant way for a broad range of audiences</td>
<td>Transfer specialized knowledge to others (customer, other professionals, patients, etc);</td>
<td>patient education; physician education; case summaries; public speaking &amp; education; journal and public press writing; creating education and marketing materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness</td>
<td>Promote teamwork, collaboration and consensus-building</td>
<td>cross-functional team-building and collaboration; networking to expand available resources; motivating others; people management and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to dissect and analyze a complex problem</td>
<td>Find solutions to problems</td>
<td>risk assessment; results interpretation; family history assessment; analysis of counseling session to provide relevant information and follow-up; utilizing data to make supported conclusions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research skills (self-education)</td>
<td>Meet deadlines and provide timely answers</td>
<td>Identifying information sources including medical literature and experts and extracting relevant information for audience; self-study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth knowledge of healthcare delivery</td>
<td>Solutions are clinically feasible, applicable &amp; fiscally responsible</td>
<td>Develop clinical protocols and policies; identify relevant benefits of genetic services for marketing purposes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References:

- “Genetic Counseling Practice Analysis” (IN PRESS: Hampel et al., J Genet Coun. June 2009)
- American Board of Genetic Counseling: Practice-Based Competencies: [www.abgc.net](http://www.abgc.net)
- Interviews of key members with experience in core skills evaluation and development (list attached)
- Industry SIG Brochure
- Industry SIG survey
- PSS Results: 2006 and 2008
- Scope of Practice
- Definition of Genetic Counseling
- NSGC Code of Ethics
- Licensure guiding principles
- Draft Billing & Reimbursement legislation
- Branding Report

Task Force Working Group:
Kristin Baker Niendorf, MS, CGC, Chair
Amelia Chappelle, MS
Michelle Fox, MS, CGC
Elizabeth Kearney, MS, CGC
Caroline Lieber, MS, CGC
Bronson Riley, MS, CGC

Ex officio
Meghan Carey
Angela Trepanier, MS, CGC

Listing of Interviewed Genetic Counselors (CSTF)
(All interviewees provided permission)

- Cathi Franklin
- Steven Keiles
- Maureen Smith
- Karen Copeland
- Sylvia Au
- Deb Lochner Doyle
- Kimberly Mooney
- Beth Balkite
- Amy Vance
- Sarina Kopinsky
- Jessica Hooks
- Kate Reed
- Sara Riordan
- Andy Faucett
- Shelly Cummings
- Ingrid Marino