

February 3, 2016

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing in support of genetic counseling licensure within the state of Minnesota. As Executive Director of the advocacy group Facing Our Risk of Cancer Empowered (FORCE), I recognize the importance of ensuring access to genetic counseling services provided by qualified professionals for individuals at-risk for hereditary conditions. With increasing complexities and technological developments in genetic testing and reproductive medicine, as well as availability of direct-to-consumer genetic testing, the need for consumers to be able to identify appropriately qualified genetic service providers has become critically important. Currently, national board certification for genetic counselors is optional and lack of certification does not limit an individual's ability to provide services in states without licensure or to call the services they are providing "Genetic Counseling" even when they do not meet nationally recognized standard-of-care guidelines. State licensure would provide a formalized regulatory structure for ensuring protection of the public and quality of service, as well as for increasing access to qualified genetic counseling services within Minnesota.

State licensure for genetic counselors is important for the following reasons.

1. Provides for protection of the public.

Licensure provides protection to the general public from unqualified individuals providing genetic counseling services. Without licensure, the public is unable to identify unqualified health care professionals and has no recourse if harmed by incorrect information.

2. Ensures minimum qualification standards.

Currently, in states without licensure, genetic counselors do not have specific requirements for certification or continuing education, since American Board of Genetic Counseling certification is optional. State licensure would impose initial and continuing education requirements for genetic counselors practicing in Minnesota.

3. Imposes means for professional accountability and recourse.

Licensure requirements provide a mechanism whereby genetic counselors themselves are held accountable for their professional practices and establishes a means for enforcement of a professional code of conduct and quality of service standards.

4. Improves access to genetic counseling services.

In states with genetic counselor licensure, it is easier for the public and other professionals to identify qualified genetic counselors, which has been shown to increase the overall access and utilization of genetic counseling services. Genetic counseling has been documented to improve patient clinical outcomes, psychosocial adjustment and screening behaviors, highlighting the importance of access to these services (*Fam Cancer*. 2006;5(1):61-75; *Genet Test*. 2005 Summer;9(2):167-74; *Soc Sci Med*. 2002;54:1463-70). Recently our organization has seen a worrisome increase in inappropriate testing and misinterpretation of test results in situations where people were not referred to experts.

For the above reasons, our organization supports Minnesota state licensure for genetic counselors.

Sincerely Yours,



Sue Friedman, DVM
Executive Director