

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
GENETIC COUNSELING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
140 E. Front Street, Trenton , NJ
2nd Floor Conference Room One

**PUBLIC SESSION MINUTES
JANUARY 7, 2011**

A meeting of the New Jersey Genetic Counseling Advisory Committee (G.C.A.C.) was held on January 7, 2011 at the Board of Medical Examiners' Office, located at 140 East Front St., 2nd Floor Conference Room , Trenton , NJ. The meeting commenced at 10:00 am.

Primary purpose of the meeting was to continue to develop the Regulatory scheme for Genetic Counseling .

I. ROLL CALL :

Present:

Erynn Gordon-Fishman, M.S., CGC (Vice-Chair)
Dr. Allan Fisher, M.D.
Elena Ashkinadze, M.S. (Chair) – VIA Phone Conference Call

Also Present :

Sandra Dick , Senior D.A.G.
Deborah Shane-Held , Regulatory Analyst G.C.A.C.
Ian Orr, Executive Director, G.C.A.C.

Excused :

Kathleen Barnes, M .S., CGC (Secretary)

II. MINUTES :

(i) PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES :

THE COMMITTEE, UPON MOTION MADE AND SECONDED, VOTED TO APPROVE THE JULY 27, 2010 AND OCTOBER 1, 2010 OPEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES.

(ii) Discussion of Definitions :

1. Upon review of previously discussed definitions it was agreed that the term **“Supervisor”** should be amended to read : A supervisor must be a New Jersey licensed genetic counselor, or a New Jersey licensed physician, Board Certified by the American Board of Medical Genetics, or **be an individual who holds** a PhD and is Certified by the American Board of Medical Genetics.

II. MINUTES (Cont'd) :

(iii) Eligibility for Licensure : (N.J.S.A. 45:9-37.118) – “Equivalent Degrees.”

The Committee discussed “**equivalent**” degrees required to meet eligibility requirements to be licensed as a Genetic Counselor. It was noted that there is not just one ‘standard’ degree in Genetic Counseling that is offered by all colleges offering such a program. In fact , each college that offers a Genetic Counseling curriculum, may choose to issue a different degree. For example, some schools/programs might issue an ‘MAG’ (Masters in Genetics) degree, while another school may offer a Masters in Genetic Counseling (‘MGC’ degree). There may also be other degrees in addition to the MAG or MGC degrees noted.

It is recognized that the first Genetic Counseling Program was offered at Sarah Lawrence College in 1969. However, there were no accredited degree programs prior to 1993. The first recognized accrediting body for Genetic Counseling was the **American Board of Medical Genetics (ABMG)**, which began accrediting in 1993 and administered its first Certification exam in 1993. The accreditation of Genetic Counseling training programs and Certification of Genetic Counselors was transferred to the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC) in 1995, such that currently, the ABGC is the sole accrediting body.

While this topic will need to be further discussed, **it is generally agreed that an applicant for a Genetic Counselor license must have obtained a degree from a Genetic Counseling training program accredited by ABMC or ABGC.**

– It was noted that the ABGC website contains a list of schools with accredited genetic counseling programs. There are 32 accredited Genetic Counseling programs in the USA and 3 in Canada .

– Currently , there are 88 Certified Genetic Counselors in New Jersey.

(iv) Eligibility for Licensure: (N.J.S.A. 45:9-37.118) -- Certification Exam.

It was reported to the Committee that between 1995 to 2009 the Certification exam was co-administered by ABMG & ABGC . As of 2009, the **ABMG** has not administered a Certification Exam for Genetic Counselors. There is **currently one (1) exam** which is administered **by the American Board of Genetic Counselors (ABGC)**. The exam is offered once a year during a one (1) month period.

Importantly, prior to 2009, an individual holding a degree from a ‘foreign’ school **or** an individual who did not have a degree in Genetic Counseling, but was practicing genetic counseling (eg. a Nurse), was permitted to take the Certifying exam. However, since 2009, they

are not eligible to take the Certification exam since they do not hold a degree from an accredited school/program. There is no grand fathering clause in the statute.

(v) Eligibility for Licensure :(N.J.S.A. 45:9-37.118) – Satisfaction of Experience.

The Committee discussed whether “**experience proficiencies**” as required in the statute to be “**at least equivalent to the standards of the American Board of Genetic Counseling**” needs to further defined in regulations by establishing minimum requirements for types of experience required. The Committee seemed divided on whether additional training/experience in defined core competencies should be mandatory as a condition for licensure.

An option discussed for consideration would require completion of a minimum of 1000 hours of work experience within 3 years of the date of application for licensure ?

There was discussion on what would constitute appropriate ‘work experience’– as a proposal for consideration, that experience should consist of: face to face counseling including involvement in family histories, risk counseling, results interpretation, and working with physician to develop a differential basis based on clinical symptoms ? In the lab setting , work experience could include coordinating , teaching and following up with lab results ?

It was agreed the Committee would think more about this topic and discuss at a subsequent meeting.

(vi) Powers, duties of Genetic Counseling Advisory Committee: (N.J.S.A. 45:9-37.115)–Preliminary Discussions.

It was noted that there are several areas related to this statutory cite that will require further discussion for inclusion in regulations. **Specific topics will include:** duty to warn; record keeping; standards for joint protocol; advertising; confidentiality; malpractice; ethical conduct; cultural competency; continuing education (including genetics & medical ethics – see 45:9-37.119).

To help guide the Committee in development of appropriate language re ‘ethical conduct’ , Committee Chair, Elena Ashkinadze offered to obtain and distribute for Committee review , the **National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) Code of Ethics.**

The Committee will attempt to obtain the Continuing Education (CE) annual credit requirements as determined by ABGC. It is understood that that Association, requires 25 credit hours per year. In addition, the Committee will reference the American Board of Genetic Counselors CE standards for re-certification.

