

ACGC BULLETIN: Clinical Training of Genetic Counseling Students

Released: 9/8/2017

Introduction

The Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (“ACGC”) recognizes that the genetic counseling profession is in an era of unprecedented growth. As genetics and genomics continue to expand and become further integrated into healthcare, the need for appropriately trained genetic counselors continues to grow. As existing genetic counseling training programs (“Programs”) increase the number of students that they are training, and as new Programs are developed, the need for clinical training opportunities is growing. Particularly in geographic areas where more than one Program exists or is developing, concerns can arise regarding the availability of adequate clinical training opportunities to accommodate all students in each Program. All genetic counseling organizations play a role in supporting the growth ongoing in our field, and this bulletin addresses the role of ACGC related to clinical training of genetic counseling graduate students.

Authority of ACGC

ACGC is the specialized program accreditation board for educational training programs granting Master’s degrees in genetic counseling. ACGC grants public recognition to any institution or specialized program of study that meets the *Standards of Accreditation for Graduate Programs in Genetic Counseling* (“Standards”), as determined through initial and subsequent periodic evaluations. ACGC is unable to decline accreditation to a Program solely based on geographic location or the potential for overlapping clinical rotation sites.

Role of ACGC

ACGC evaluates each existing and developing Program’s structure, resources and capability to provide genetic counseling students with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform accurately and reliably as genetic counselors, as outlined in the *Practice Based Competencies*. This training includes diverse and well-rounded clinical and didactic training that prepares an individual to provide effective genetic counseling services within a variety of practice settings.

ACGC closely monitors the landscape of clinical training. ACGC evaluates each existing and developing Program for compliance with the Standards, including a qualitative and quantitative assessment of all clinical placements proposed. This assessment process includes review of:

- Total number of clinical placements based on the proposed number of students who will be enrolled
- Formal agreements in place with clinical sites
- Number and qualifications of on-site clinical faculty member(s) or supervisor(s) designated by the program to supervise the student’s progress in achieving learning outcomes
- Number and qualifications of clinical supervision faculty and staff to ensure adequate and equivalent supervision for all enrolled students
- Type and number of clinical placements that will ensure exposure to a variety of genetic issues throughout a given life cycle of care
- Documentation of contact between existing programs within the same geographic area and newly developing programs
- Overlap of clinical sites used by multiple programs within a common geographic area

ACGC Clinical Training Assessment Taskforce

As part of ACGC's commitment to continual improvement, we convened the Clinical Training Assessment Taskforce (CTAT) in May 2017. The charge for this taskforce includes developing competency-based assessment guidelines for the clinical training of genetic counseling students and providing recommendations to the Board of Directors for revisions of the Standards related to clinical training.

Conclusion

ACGC is committed to accrediting Programs that meet the Standards, thereby facilitating the strategic goal of increasing the number of certified genetic counselors in the workforce. ACGC is eager to participate with the broader genetic counselor community to develop strategies and principles that will support and advance our profession collaboratively.

ACGC