

# Genetic Counselor Awareness Day

Partners in Your Genetic Health Care

#IAmAGeneticCounselor

Brought to you by

National Society of  
Genetic  
Counselors

## Letter-to-the-Editor Tips

As a local genetic counselor working to promote your role in healthcare, you offer a valuable perspective on community health issues. Tap the power of your experience and credentials to help shape public discourse about genetics topics. A letter-to-the-editor can be an effective tool for voicing your opinion about the importance of subjects you're passionate about, whether it's involving genetic counselors in the genetic testing process or families discussing their health history to better understand their risks and whether a professional like a genetic counselor should be involved.

Letters-to-the-editor are one of the most widely read sections of the newspaper. They not only provide an opportunity to state your views but also can influence future coverage. Here are some tips for getting your letter-to-the-editor published:

- **Check the submission guidelines** for the publication. This information is typically found in the Opinion section and specifies the length, format and how to submit a letter.
- **Be clear and concise.** Keep your letters brief and to your point. Almost all letters that are published are less than 200 words.
- **Use short, punchy sentences.** This makes it easier for the reader to follow your thinking and easier for the editor to cut your letter if necessary – and it's better to have an edited version of your letter printed than nothing at all.

Other Tips:

- **Send letters to weekly community newspapers, too.** Smaller papers receive fewer letters, so the chances of your letter running are better.
- **Be sure to include your contact information.** Many newspapers will print letters-to-the-editor only after calling authors to verify their identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information and will usually print only your name and city should your letter be published.

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## Op-Ed Tips

Op-Eds (short for “opposite the editorial page”) are similar to letters-to-the-editor but they are typically longer and are often written by a person who is an expert on a particular subject, or is known for having a strong opinion or interesting perspective. As a genetic counselor and member of NSGC, you are in a good position to submit one.

To get your Op-Ed published:

- **Tailor your submission.** Media outlets often require exclusives and won’t publish Op-Eds that have been submitted to or appeared in other outlets. Use your own background or experience to make the op-ed your own and share your thoughts about the importance of genetics issues, such as why genetic counselors should be involved in genetic testing.
- **Review samples and guidelines.** Read Op-Eds in the publication you’re submitting to get an idea of style, format and length. You may note that Op-Eds often include people’s stories and experiences. For example NSGC Expert Laura Hercher penned an Op-Ed for [The New York Times](#) about direct-to-consumer genetic testing and used an example of a man who received conflicting results about his risk for Alzheimer’s disease. You’ll also see that most pieces present a strong opinion. Also visit the publication’s website to look for the preferred word count and submission instructions.
- **Don’t delay.** While letters to the editor are usually printed quickly, an Op-Ed may take longer so you won’t want to miss the window of time when it’s relevant. For an Op-Ed to have a good chance to appear in conjunction with Genetic Counselor Awareness Day, aim to submit it no later than the week of Oct. 22.

An Op-Ed is a narrative essay that really conveys your opinion on an issue. The Op-Ed can include NSGC’s key messages but also allows for a little more space to include tailored information that highlights your personal voice. If you can share a personal experience or relate a personal story of how your skills and training make the difference in your work, the opinion piece will be even stronger.