

Deborah A. Shelton, PhD, RN, NE-BC, NPD-BC, CCHP, FAAN

Professor Emerita, University of Connecticut | Co-Founder, Consultant, Educator, Center for Correctional Nursing (C4CN)

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Correctional Nursing Workforce Strategist | Nurse Professional Development Leader | Research and Practice Translation Expert

Deborah A. Shelton, PhD, RN, NE-BC, NPD-BC, CCHP, FAAN, is a nationally recognized correctional nursing scholar, educator, consultant, and workforce strategist. Her work helps correctional health leaders strengthen nurse readiness, professional identity, retention, clinical competency, and evidence-based specialty practice across jails, prisons, detention settings, juvenile justice settings, and reentry-connected systems of care.

Dr. Shelton brings deep expertise in correctional nursing, nurse professional development, competency-based education, professional identity formation, workforce stabilization, correctional health standards, and research translation. She is known for building practical bridges between nursing scholarship, specialty standards, workforce needs, and real-world correctional health operations.

Professional Value

Dr. Shelton works with correctional health leaders, nursing organizations, educators, researchers, and workforce partners to design practical systems that help nurses enter, understand, and remain in correctional nursing practice. Her work is especially relevant to organizations seeking to:

- Strengthen onboarding, transition-to-practice, and competency-based education programs.
- Improve correctional nurse recruitment, retention, professional identity, and role clarity.
- Develop correctional nursing education aligned with specialty standards and workforce realities.
- Translate research into actionable tools, curricula, dashboards, presentations, and practice guidance.
- Support nurse leaders, preceptors, educators, and professional development practitioners.
- Advance correctional nursing as a defined, evidence-informed specialty practice.

Core Capabilities

- Correctional nursing workforce strategy
- Transition-to-practice education
- Professional identity formation in nursing
- Correctional health standards and specialty practice guidance
- Consensus development and national practice mapping
- Correctional health education program design
- Conference speaking, facilitation, and professional education
- Nurse professional development (NPD)
- Competency-based curriculum design
- Correctional nurse recruitment and retention
- Research translation and knowledge mobilization
- Nursing leadership, mentoring, and workforce development
- Grant writing, proposal development, and evaluation planning
- Interprofessional collaboration across health care and custody environments

Selected National Impact

- Co-founder, first president, and board member of the American Correctional Nurses Association (ACNA), supporting the development of a national professional home for correctional nurses.
- Chair, Nurse Advisory Council, and Director, Nurse Education Program, National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), contributing to national correctional health education and nursing practice priorities.
- Co-founder, owner, and educator with the Center for Correctional Nursing (C4CN), a specialty-focused organization supporting correctional nursing education, workforce development, research translation, and professional practice.
- National Consensus Leader for the Nursing Interventions Classification (NIC) for Correctional Nursing project, supporting standardized description of contemporary correctional nursing practice.
- Team member for the 2025–2026 ACNA/American Nurses Association (ANA) Scope and Standards for Correctional Nursing revision.
- Workforce and Education Committees for NCCHC, contributing to national correctional health education and workforce development.
- Invited specialty practice member, National Corrections Collaborative Taskforce and National Competency-Based Education Nurse Network.
- Research Committee Chair, ACNA, supporting research development and dissemination within the specialty.

Current and Recent Professional Roles

Center for Correctional Nursing (C4CN) — **Co-Founder | Owner | Educator | Consultant** | 2025–Present

Develops correctional nursing education, workforce-development resources, research translation products, professional identity content, and consulting services for correctional health organizations and nursing partners.

National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) — **Chair, Nurse Advisory Council | Director, Nurse Education Program** | 2025–Present

Provides national nursing leadership and education guidance for correctional health care professionals. Supports nursing education priorities, specialty practice development, and workforce-focused initiatives.

American Correctional Nurses Association (ACNA) — **Research Committee Chair** | 2024–Present

Leads and supports research-focused activities that advance correctional nursing scholarship, practice visibility, and specialty knowledge development.

University of Connecticut — **Professor Emerita** | 2017–Present

Continues scholarly, educational, and professional contributions following academic leadership in nursing, correctional health research networks, education, and professional development.

Selected Prior Experience

- Director, Center for Correctional Health Research Networks, University of Connecticut Schools of Medicine and Nursing.
- Adjunct Professor, University of North Carolina and North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Adult Corrections.
- Correctional Health Compliance Monitor, North Carolina Department of Public Safety.
- Adjunct Professor, Binghamton University, Correctional Health and Criminal Justice.

- Consultant, Shelton Consulting Services, supporting research, editorial writing, grants, and education contracts.

Selected Publications and Scholarly Contributions

- MacLennan, S., Smith, S., & Shelton, D. (2026, submitted). Mapping professional identity in U.S. correctional nursing: Tree of impact analysis. *Advancing Corrections Journal*.
- Smith, S., MacLennan, S., & Shelton, D. (2026, accepted). Professional identity in correctional nursing: Why it matters in jails. *American Jails*.
- Shelton, D., Brockman, A., Norman, H., Roscoe, L. E., San Miguel, P., Smith, S., & Strada, M. (2026, under review). Defining correctional nursing practice through the Nursing Interventions Classification: Results of a national consensus review.
- Shelton, D., Roscoe, L., Kapetanovic, T., & Smith, S. (2025). The correctional nursing workforce crisis: An innovative solution to meet the challenge. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*.
- Reagan, L., Kitt-Lewis, E. A., Loeb, S. J., Shelton, D., & Zucker, D. (2024). Health equity for people who live in correctional facilities: Addressing bias, stigma, and dehumanization. *Research in Nursing & Health*.
- Roscoe, L., Smith, S., & Shelton, D. (2023). Translating the Essentials for correctional nursing practice and professional development. *Journal for Nurses in Professional Development*.
- Clifton, J., Maruca, A., Loeb, S. J., Zucker, D. M., Muse, M. V., & Shelton, D. (2022). Public academic partnerships in correctional nursing. *Journal of Professional Nursing*.
- Muse, M., Shelton, D., et al. (2021). *Scope and Standards of Practice: Correctional Nursing* (3rd ed.). American Nurses Association.
- Shelton, D. (Ed.). (2021). Special issue: Correctional nursing. *Journal of Correctional Health Care*.
- Shelton, D., Maruca, A. T., & Wright, R. (2020). Nursing in the American justice system. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*.

Selected Presentations and National Education

- What Correctional Nurses Really Do: Defining Practice Through Nursing Interventions Classification (NIC) and Nursing Outcomes Classification (NOC). NCCHC National Conference on Correctional Health Care, 2026.
- Workforce Stability: Culture, Support, and Retention by Design. NCCHC National Conference on Correctional Health Care, 2026.
- The Lateral Leader: The Nurse Professional Development Practitioner Role. NCCHC National Conference on Correctional Health Care, 2026.
- The Draw: Recruitment and Retention of Correctional Health Professionals. NCCHC National Conference on Correctional Health Care, 2026.
- Building Effective Nursing Orientation and Competency Programs with NPD Principles. NCCHC Spring and Virtual Conferences, 2026.
- Mapping Professional Identity and Value in Nursing. NCCHC Spring Conference on Correctional Health Care, 2026.
- Professional Identity in Correctional Nursing: Why Does It Matter? ACNA Virtual Webinar Series, 2026.
- Professional Identity and Workforce Wellness. Safety, Corrections & Health in Action Symposium, 2025.
- National Nursing Interventions Classification for Correctional Nursing. ACNA Virtual Webinar, 2025.
- Rethinking Recruitment and Retention in Nursing. NCCHC Spring Conference, 2025.

Education, Licensure, and Certifications

Education

- Postdoctoral Fellowship, Mental Health Services Research, Johns Hopkins University
- Postdoctoral Fellowship, Mental Health Services Research, University of Virginia
- PhD, Nursing Education, University of Virginia
- MS, Mental Health Nursing, University of Washington
- BS, Nursing, University of Bridgeport
- RN, Nursing, St. Vincent's College

Licensure and Certifications

- Registered Nurse, North Carolina Board of Nursing
- Certified Correctional Health Professional (CCHP), NCCHC
- Nurse Executive-Board Certified (NE-BC)
- Nursing Professional Development-Board Certified (NPD-BC)
- Fellow, American Academy of Nursing (FAAN)
- Human Subjects Research Certification, CITI and NIH

Professional Positioning Statement

Dr. Shelton is a trusted educator and strategic partner to correctional health leaders who are working to stabilize the nursing workforce, prepare specialty-ready nurses, and build evidence-informed systems that strengthen correctional nursing practice.