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NEWS RELEASE

UConn's Center for Correctional Health Networks Opening

For more information:

Sheila Foran, UConn Communications
Tel: 860-486-5385; sheila.foran@uconn.edu

Barbara Slater, UConn School of Nursing
(860) 486-2591; barbara.slater@uconn.edu

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STORRS, Conn. – The UConn Center for Correctional Health Networks (CCHNet) is a newly formed practice-based research center designed to support its interdisciplinary network members. CCHNet members study and test health care innovations and quality improvement strategies in real world corrections practice settings to determine effectiveness, efficiency and equity of outcomes on persons with incarceration experiences. The center is sponsored by UConn's Schools of Nursing, Medicine, and Pharmacy, and the Research Program on Global Health and Human Rights at the UConn Human Rights Institute.

“The Center for Correctional Health Networks fulfills the most important role of a Land Grant university: Serving the citizens of Connecticut through education and applied research. At the same time, it fulfills the central mission of nursing to provide health care for vulnerable populations. CCHNet is already making its mark nationally and internationally and we are very proud of the work of our outstanding faculty and staff,” said Provost Mun Choi.

Among its initiatives, UConn's CCHNet has developed an evidence-based professional training program for correctional facility nurses. This initiative, led by the UConn School of Nursing, is the only such academic correctional health center operating in Connecticut. Under the leadership of Dr. Deborah Shelton, this state-of-the-art continuing education program received the Josephine Dolan Award for Education from the Connecticut Nurses Association for advancing correctional nursing competencies among nurses across the state. After three years of implementation, this program demonstrates significant improvement in patient care provided by nurses.

"Opening this center allows correctional health research the support it needs to advance health care for the incarcerated," according to Dr. Regina Cusson, the Dean of the School of Nursing. "With the center, the UConn School of Nursing is poised to play a leading role in bringing health benefits into the lives of these patients. Researchers at CCHNet are building collaborations among clinical nurses, health researchers, and the health industry to bring technology into the correctional clinical setting, and assist not only with Connecticut's prison system but also our nation's."

The center will officially open its doors with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to be held on Wednesday, October 29 at 4 p.m. at the School of Nursing's Widmer Wing, Storrs Campus.

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Correctional nurses provide services at 17 Department of Correction facilities statewide through a contract for health services with Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC), providing medical, mental health, pharmacy, and dental services for the approximately 16,594 people who are incarcerated or in halfway houses.

CMHC employs about 17 advanced practice registered nurses, 206 registered nurses, 113 licensed practical nurses, 22 nurse clinicians, 18 nursing supervisors, and 63 per diem nurses.

Continuing education is critical for correctional facility nurses because they work with a population whose rates of medical and psychiatric diseases are significantly larger than those in the community. Almost half of Connecticut's inmates were on medications as of June 2011, and every newly admitted inmate requires a medical and mental health screening.