



NurseConneCT | February 26, 2026 | 16th Edition

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## Building the Workforce We Deserve

*February invites reflection, and it also demands action.*

As we recognize Black History Month, we are reminded that nursing has always been shaped by courageous leaders who advanced care in the face of systemic barriers. Their work did not just improve patient outcomes. It expanded who belongs in this profession.

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Call for CT Nurses to share  
about themselves

## STAY CONNECTED

Find links to the CCNW website  
and social media pages. Also,  
share feedback or submit ideas for  
newsletter

Today, Connecticut faces familiar workforce challenges, vacancy rates, clinical placement constraints, faculty shortages, and increasing patient acuity. But we are not starting from scratch. We have data. We have partnerships. And we have a generation of nurses ready to lead differently.

The work ahead is not about filling gaps. It is about redesigning systems.

At CCNW, **we are prioritizing:**

- Strengthening academic, practice partnerships
- Expanding clinical innovation models
- Supporting seamless transition to practice
- Elevating leadership pathways across career stages

The future of nursing in Connecticut will not happen to us. We will build it, intentionally.

**Let's get to work.**

## PATHWAY TO NURSING

### Why Nursing in Connecticut Right Now?

Connecticut's nursing pipeline continues to grow. In 2024, the state had 31 RN pre-licensure programs with nearly 7,900 students enrolled across associate, BSN, accelerated, and master's entry pathways. Enrollment increased about 5% from 2023 to 2024, with particularly strong growth in accelerated BSN programs.

Source: <https://www.ctdata.org/nursing-education-data-2024>

Statewide programs offered more than 3,300 new RN seats in 2024, with most seats filled, signaling sustained interest and workforce demand.

Where the Need Is Highest:

- Behavioral health
- Long term care
- Primary care
- Community and home based care

Connecticut is preparing more nurses, but healthcare systems continue to signal need across regions. For prospective students,



*If you are considering a career in nursing, the question is not just can you do it, it is is this the right time. In Connecticut, the answer is clear. The demand is strong, the education pathways are expanding, and opportunity is real.*

that means strong job prospects, multiple education pathways, and a profession positioned for long term stability and impact.

People make decisions based on opportunity. The opportunity is here.

## STUDENT SUCESS CORNER

### Study Smart, Lead Early

February is an ideal time to reset study habits before midterms and clinical evaluations intensify.

Practical strategies:

- Use active recall rather than passive rereading
- Form small accountability study groups
- Practice NCLEX-style questions weekly, not just before exams
- Schedule recovery time to prevent burnout

Clinical Tip:

- Treat every clinical day like a job interview. Professionalism, preparation, and initiative matter.

Upcoming NCLEX updates emphasize clinical judgment and decision-making. Prioritize case-based practice questions and simulation exposure.

Your habits now shape your confidence later.



*Nursing school is demanding.  
Strategy makes the difference.*

## LAUNCHING YOUR CAREER

### From Graduate to Professional

Connecticut employers are actively recruiting new graduates, especially those prepared for transition-to-practice programs.

Position yourself strategically:

- Tailor your resume to highlight clinical competencies, not just coursework
- Quantify impact during clinical rotations when possible
- Prepare structured responses using the STAR method for interviews
- Research nurse residency programs early



New nurses who seek mentorship in their first year report higher retention and confidence.

*Graduation is close. Preparation starts now.*

Your first role does not define your entire career. But it does shape your foundation. Choose environments that invest in your growth.

## ADVANCED PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

### Clinical Nurse Specialists, The Engine Behind Quality

A Clinical Nurse Specialist, CNS, is an APRN prepared at the master's or doctoral level with national certification in a defined population or specialty area. In Connecticut, CNSs are licensed as APRNs and practice in hospitals, specialty clinics, behavioral health settings, long term care, and community based systems.

Their role spans three spheres: direct patient care, nursing practice leadership, and system improvement. CNSs lead evidence based initiatives, reduce complications, mentor nurses, and drive quality and safety outcomes across organizations.

The national organization supporting the role, the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists, will host its 2026 Annual Conference March 9 to 12 in San Diego, focusing on innovation, policy updates, and leadership in CNS practice.



*Clinical Nurse Specialists are advanced practice nurses who elevate care beyond the bedside by strengthening systems, improving outcomes, and mentoring the nursing workforce.*

## LEARN MORE

## LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

### Advocacy at the Frontlines: Shaping Policy That Shapes Nursing

The American Nurses Association (ANA) has issued a call for public comments on a proposed rule from the U.S. Department of Education that could change how nursing degrees are classified and recognized federally. This isn't abstract bureaucracy — it can impact how nursing education, licensure preparation, and workforce pipelines are valued and supported at the national level. ANA's action alerts and tools give each of us a framework for participation.



*Leadership isn't just about managing teams. It's about*

*making sure nurses' voices shape  
the policies that affect the  
profession.*

Submitting comments through advocacy platforms like ANA's Quorum campaign ensures that the expertise we live every day at the bedside, in classrooms, and in health systems informs policy outcomes.

Why this matters:

- Nurses bring essential perspective to public policy that directly affects workforce preparation and recognition.
- Regulatory decisions are not final until after the public comment period — your voice at this stage counts.
- Engagement now strengthens the profession long-term and aligns with ethical imperatives for civic participation and social justice within nursing.

This February, **let's lead by example** — not just in clinical excellence, but in advocacy that protects nursing's future.

**SUBMIT A COMMENT VIA RN ACTION**

## NURSING NEWS





[Home](#) > [Health Care Scholars United](#)

# Health Care Scholars United

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Are you a current or aspiring health professional? This \$3,200 scholarship will help you take your healthcare career to the next level.

## Scholarship Spotlight, Health Care Scholars United

Health Care Scholars United, funded through a \$100 million, 10 year commitment from the United Health Foundation, provides scholarships to current and aspiring health professionals pursuing clinical degrees or certifications. The initiative **aims to support 10,000 scholars by 2033** to strengthen the healthcare workforce and improve access, experience, and outcomes nationwide.

Who should apply:

- Students in their final year of a clinical degree or certificate program
- Individuals demonstrating financial need
- Those enrolled no later than Fall 2026 and graduating by June 30, 2027
- U.S. citizens, nationals, or lawful permanent residents

Priority is given to careers in pharmacy, rural health, behavioral health, maternal health, and primary care. Eligible programs include nursing, physician assistant, clinical psychologist, and clinical social worker pathways, among others.

Awards are paid directly to accredited institutions and may be used for eligible academic programs, not license fees or exam costs.

Applications are reviewed based on financial need, community impact, career goals, leadership through adversity, and commitment to improving access to quality healthcare.

**Application deadline:** March 24, 2026 at 3:00 PM CT

If you or someone in your network is advancing toward a clinical health career, this opportunity could significantly reduce financial strain while accelerating impact.

***Consider sharing widely across your institutions and professional networks.***



*If tuition is the barrier between you and your next credential, this is worth your attention.*

**LEARN MORE**

**VIEW ALL CCNW UPCOMING EVENTS**

## I AM A CT NURSE

### Call for CT Nurses to share about themselves

CCNW is proud to launch the “**I Am a CT Nurse**” campaign to recognize and celebrate the highly skilled nurses serving Connecticut communities every day. We invite all CT nurses to submit a short, 45–60 second video sharing your name, school and or organization, license, and what you love most about being a CT nurse. By participating, you’ll help shine a spotlight on the dedication, compassion, and expertise that define our state’s nursing profession.



To learn more about how to submit your video, visit our [website](#).

### Learn How To Submit Your Video

CCNW ANNUAL NURSING WORKFORCE SUPPORTERS

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Stay  
Connected  
With CCNW

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

Please take a few moments and share your feedback with us.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

**NEWSLETTER SIGNUP**

Like our newsletter? Share with your colleagues

<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/s1/ZSZi4fe/newslettersignup>

**RECOMMENDED HASHTAGS**

#CTNursingWorkforce  
#NursingExcellenceCT  
#ConnecticutNurses



#CTNurseLeaders  
#CTNursingCommunity  
#HealthCareWorkforceCT

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