

WIC State Agencies Receive Support to Implement Online Ordering Projects

OMAHA, NE. (December 3, 2021) – The Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, an independent nonprofit research and evaluation organization, announced the three Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) sub-grantees that will receive funding to implement WIC online ordering projects. These projects will implement and test approaches to allow WIC participants to order and/or purchase groceries online using their WIC benefits. As more than 6 million women, infants, and children have participated in WIC each year since the mid-1990s, online shopping has the potential to enhance the shopping experience for participants, including the added benefit of providing access to those with limited transportation or other issues impeding the participant's ability to go to a grocery store. For more information regarding the WIC Program, please visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>.

Recipients and their projects include:

- **Minnesota (lead), Iowa, and Nebraska WIC Programs:** The Midwest States WIC Online Ordering Pilot (MSWOOP) partnership includes Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska WIC state agencies and aims to create an equitable shopping experience for participants by implementing online ordering at Hy-Vee grocery stores. This includes piloting an online ordering and payment solution with regional grocery retailer Hy-Vee and online WIC EBT (eWIC) processor FIS/CDP. WIC participants in these states expressed interest in online ordering and shopping to overcome transportation and time constraint barriers and reduce stigma associated with using WIC benefits. The pandemic also created a need for online shopping, but current WIC program regulations and systems could not meet that need. The grant project will begin with one store in Des Moines, Iowa, and expand into Minnesota and Nebraska to meet the modern needs of WIC participants.
- **South Dakota (lead) and Rosebud Sioux Tribe WIC Programs:** The South Dakota and Rosebud WIC Programs will be implementing WIC online ordering with Buche Foods grocery stores. Customers will be able to purchase all their groceries – WIC and non-WIC – in one online transaction. Many of our participants face the dual challenge of rural and remote isolation accompanied with poverty, which combined can pose significant barriers to transportation and obtaining groceries. The WIC agencies will work together to pilot WIC online ordering in Pine Ridge located on the Oglala Lakota Indian Reservation and Mission located on the Rosebud Indian Reservation. After successful implementation at our initial pilot sites, we plan to expand online ordering to five additional Buche Foods grocery stores throughout the state.
- **Washington (lead) and Massachusetts WIC Programs:** Washington State WIC is partnering with Massachusetts WIC, FIS/CDP, and Walmart to bring online shopping to WIC participants in our two states. Online shopping for WIC participants using Walmart as their WIC store is expected to go live next year, using Walmart's Online Ordering Platform. The option will be available at eligible Walmart stores in both states. Ultimately this option will help nearly 120,000 WIC participants in Washington, and 115,000 in Massachusetts access their WIC benefits safely and efficiently. Online shopping will help WIC participants use more of their benefit every month, which means healthier children and families.

Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition will evaluate sub-grant projects to explore key aspects of WIC online ordering and transactions, such as factors related to successful adoption and implementation, costs, and overall impact. Results will be used to finalize the implementation guide, the Blueprint for WIC Online Ordering Projects, for WIC online ordering to reflect the real-life implementation experiences and to create a results-based report for WIC that includes a set of recommendations to

potentially increase the availability of and support for WIC online ordering across the United States. The Blueprint for WIC Online Ordering Projects can be found on Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition's website: <https://www.centerfornutrition.org/wic-online-ordering/#sub-grant>.

"WIC has demonstrated effectiveness across several health outcomes, including diet quality. Despite this, participants face known access and equity issues when shopping with WIC benefits. The COVID-19 pandemic has only added to and exacerbated these barriers. Households that participate in WIC should have the opportunity to shop for foods, especially those needed to address critical nutritional needs, the way anyone else shops for food, by ordering online. These projects will create a foundation for WIC State agencies and retailers to design ordering platforms and processes to allow for WIC online ordering and transactions while maintaining program integrity and a positive customer experience," said Gretchen Swanson Center Executive Director Amy Yaroch, PhD.

This sub-grant opportunity, funded through a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, will last from December 1, 2021, through July 31, 2023. For more information about this opportunity, please visit www.centerfornutrition.org/wic-online-ordering.

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About the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition

Based in Omaha, Nebraska, the [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](http://www.centerfornutrition.org) is an independent research institution providing scientific expertise, partnership, and resources to improve diet and physical activity behaviors among youth and their families to help grow a healthier next generation. The Gretchen Swanson Center partners with organizations across the U.S., focusing on healthy eating, active living, food security, policy advocacy, and health equity.

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