

## **US Department of Agriculture selects Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition to lead WIC Online Ordering Initiative**

*Award part of effort to promote participant satisfaction and improve access to healthy foods for millions of WIC participants*

**16 NOVEMBER 2020 | OMAHA, Neb.** — The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has awarded Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (Gretchen Swanson Center) to lead a \$2.5 million effort to develop and test a safe and secure plan for implementing online grocery ordering for participants of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

FNS administers 15 nutrition assistance programs that leverage American agricultural abundance to ensure children and low-income individuals and families have nutritious food to eat. FNS also co-develops the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which provide science-based nutrition recommendations and serve as the cornerstone of federal nutrition policy.

For the first time ever, FNS is investing in the future of online ordering for WIC. The USDA WIC Online Ordering Initiative is being conducted alongside other ongoing USDA work to expand online shopping in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The overarching goal of the USDA WIC Online Ordering Initiative is to support WIC by building the capacity of WIC State agencies to implement online ordering to expand the shopping opportunities for their participants.

Partnering with [Custom Data Processing, Inc. \(CDP\)](#) and [National Grocers Association \(NGA\) Foundation](#), Omaha, Nebraska-based Gretchen Swanson Center will use the three-year, competitive grant to:

- Develop a plan for implementing online ordering (both with in-person and online transactions) in WIC, while protecting the integrity of the program;
- Create the resources necessary for WIC stakeholders to ensure safe and secure implementation;
- Test and implement online ordering in up to five states via sub-grants to WIC State agencies, to be selected at a later date; and
- Evaluate and report on the results to inform future expansion.

“This is a barrier-breaking effort to create increased accessibility for WIC participants and we couldn’t be more excited to help make this happen,” said Amy Yaroch, PhD, Executive Director at Gretchen Swanson Center. “CDP is an industry leader in developing technology and web-based improvements for USDA supplemental nutrition programs, and their expertise will greatly benefit this effort. NGA Foundation’s involvement is key to ensure that independent and smaller grocers are not left behind in this process and that online ordering will be feasible for participating retailers.”

Viable solutions for online ordering will address the various factors associated with implementation of online ordering for a wide range of stakeholders. Considering this complexity, the project team will take a systems-based approach using an implementation framework to guide a formative study, RFP development process, and evaluation and technical assistance during the sub-grant program.

“Independent grocers play a key role in their communities by providing a wide variety of affordable fresh and high-quality food items,” said Greg Ferrara, NGA Foundation President, and President & CEO of NGA. “The NGA Foundation looks forward to working with our partners on this pioneering initiative to bring critical services and food items to mothers and children in need, especially during these challenging times resulting from the pandemic.”

“CDP is excited to be part of this important project. Advancing the ability for WIC families to shop for their benefits through online ordering fits with our mission to deliver technology that makes a difference,” Stan Cochran, CEO, CDP, Inc., said.

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**The Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition** is a nonprofit research and evaluation organization providing scientific expertise and partnership in the key public health areas of healthy eating active living, food insecurity, policy advocacy and health equity. The Gretchen Swanson Center specializes in the development and implementation of mixed-methods approaches, which are primarily focused on measuring changes that occur through policy, systems and environmental interventions. The Gretchen Swanson Center works nationally by providing research and evaluation services to communities, nonprofits, academic and government institutions and policymakers. For more information about Gretchen Swanson Center, please visit [www.centerfornutrition.org](http://www.centerfornutrition.org).

**The NGA Foundation** is the 501(c)3 nonprofit arm of the National Grocers Association. The Foundation provides independent retailers with tools to develop more effective recruiting programs, enhance retention efforts and bolster professional leadership development opportunities for employers. The National Grocers Association (NGA) is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or

controlled food retail company operating a variety of formats. The independent grocery sector is accountable for close to one percent of the nation's overall economy and is responsible for generating \$131 billion in sales, 944,000 jobs, \$30 billion in wages, and \$27 billion in taxes. NGA members include retail and wholesale grocers, state grocers associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers. For more information about NGA, visit [www.nationalgrocers.org](http://www.nationalgrocers.org).

**Custom Data Processing (CDP)** has been providing electronic health solutions to federal, state and local health organizations since 1979. Our focus is on software that makes a difference, which is developed, tested, and implemented by people who make a difference. CDP has supported WIC with innovative technology solutions for more than 30 years and created the first government-sponsored WIC EBT processing platform more than a decade ago. CDP's EBT processing platform reflects the most up-to-date WIC EBT technology consistent with current USDA-FNS policies and expectations regarding rules, standards and technology. CDP's unparalleled experience of implementing 35 WIC EBT solutions using both online and smart card technologies is coupled with the implementation and support of multiple WIC Management Information System solutions nationally. CDP is the only company providing WIC technical solutions that works on both sides of the WIC Universal MIS EBT Interface (WUMEI) which enables CDP to provide unrivaled insight and perspective on how to create holistic solutions to advance WIC technology. In addition, CDP created the first and leading WIC data warehouse, Data Direct, to provide CDP's WIC customers with optimal data visualization and reporting capability.