



## Instacart and Wellness West Announce Partnership to Tackle Food Insecurity on Chicago's West Side

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CHICAGO, Oct. 24, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- [Wellness West](#), a coalition of Chicago's health and safety-net institutions, and [Instacart](#) (Nasdaq: CART), the leading grocery technology company in North America, today announced a new partnership that leverages the scale and convenience of Instacart to help food-insecurity and chronically ill individuals on the West Side of Chicago.



Through the partnership, Wellness West will launch a new "Food Connections" program, which will offer eligible Wellness West members a monthly grocery stipend of \$79, delivered through Instacart Health [Fresh Funds](#), that can be used to purchase nutritious foods like fresh and frozen produce for delivery via Instacart. The digital stipend can be combined with other food benefit programs, like SNAP or eligible supplemental health benefits, allowing members to complete their full shop in one order, creating a more convenient and accessible grocery shopping experience.

Wellness West addresses health equity needs of up to 200,000 uninsured and Medicaid-insured patients diagnosed with at least one of six specific medical conditions who live in 10 West Side zip codes. Instacart today reaches more than 95% of U.S. households, including 93% of food desert residents and nearly 95% of households enrolled in SNAP.<sup>1</sup>

"We are very pleased to be joining forces with Instacart to advance the cause of health equity," said Misty Drake, Executive Director, Wellness West, who also serves as the Vice President, Client Serves and Growth, for Medical Home Network. "For the communities we serve, a whole person model of care that addresses social factors such as access to healthy food is essential. With this partnership, Instacart's state-of-the-art consumer-tech platform is brought to the mission of helping people across the West Side who are facing significant barriers to healthy dietary options."

"Everyone should have reliable access to healthy and nutritious food, but today, far too many communities experience nutrition insecurity. Through Instacart Health, we're using the power of our technology to bridge the gap and ensure more families can put wholesome foods on their tables," said Sarah Mastrocco, Vice President and General Manager of Instacart Health. "We're proud to partner with Wellness West to help families on the West Side of Chicago overcome barriers to access and get the foods they need to support their health and well-being."

### ***Food Insecurity: A Worsening Problem for Chicago's Most Vulnerable***

Most people in Chicago facing food insecurity are children, older adults and the poor. Food insecurity can be caused by a job loss, lack of transportation or health issues. Many Chicagoans are only one paycheck away from facing food insecurity.

- In Chicago metro, 16% of households overall and 22% of households with children suffer from food insecurity. 29% percent of Black households experience food insecurity.<sup>2</sup>
- The Food Empowerment Project reports that more than 500,000 Chicago residents live in food deserts with the vast majority of those living on the South and West Sides.<sup>3</sup>
- In the last year, Wellness West has completed over 15,000 Health Risk Assessments of vulnerable populations on the West Side.<sup>4</sup>
  - 34% of those surveyed reported running out of food or were worried about running out of food in the last year for lack of money.<sup>5</sup>
  - 25% reported needing transportation assistance, which is also an important variable to food access.<sup>6</sup>

Research published by the University of Kentucky, No Kid Hungry and Instacart found that online grocery shopping helps low-income families – including SNAP households – stretch their food budgets, overcome transportation barriers, assist with meal planning, and save time and money. The study also found that families that shopped online purchased more fruits and vegetables than in-store shoppers, without increasing their total grocery bill.<sup>7</sup>

"For too many Chicagoans, choices about what to eat are limited by access and affordability," said Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson. "My administration is committed to advancing innovative solutions and supporting public-private partnerships to address these food inequities. It's inspiring to see Wellness West and Instacart partnering to address these challenges and ensure more West Side residents can access and afford the nutritious food they deserve."

### ***Nutrition: The Key to Stabilize Hypertension and Diabetes***

The new Food Connections program with Instacart is one piece of a broader strategy by Wellness West to stabilize hypertension and diabetes among its participant populations. Both chronic diseases disproportionately impact poor and minority communities. Nutrition and diet have a significant role to play in fighting these diseases, and Instacart will provide one more option to support people who are struggling with healthy food access.

### ***An Impactful Model***

Instacart Health Fresh Funds have been successfully implemented in communities across the country through Instacart's partnerships with healthcare

and nonprofit organizations. In Indianapolis, Instacart partnered Partnership for Healthier America (PHA) to compare the impact of pre-packaged produce box deliveries with produce credits delivered through Fresh Funds digital grocery stipends. The results showed that Fresh Funds supported significant improvements in food security for families and that 80 percent of respondents preferred the Fresh Funds produce credits over pre-packaged produce boxes. Participants noted that they favored the selection and choice available on Instacart as well as the dignity of choice to purchase groceries that meet their unique tastes, needs and budgets. 78 percent of program participants also said that produce credits helped their family build a healthy habit, and 79 percent reported they planned to continue to eat more produce moving forward.<sup>8</sup>

### **Engaging Small and Family-owned Grocery Stores**

Through the partnership, Wellness West will also work closely with Instacart to identify and engage small, local grocery stores on the West Side that are well-suited to launch online grocery ordering and delivery through Instacart. For Wellness West members, this means more local shopping choices, and for small grocery operators on the West Side, this means new potential revenue streams to help them stay competitive. Grocery retailers of all sizes have struggled lately to build sustainable business models in underserved areas throughout Chicago, as evidenced by recent closures of well-known grocery brands on Chicago's West and South Sides.

"We applaud this new initiative and the grocers who have chosen to participate," said Rob Karr, President and CEO, Illinois Retail Merchants Association. "Wellness West's Food Connections program, in partnership with Instacart, comes at a crucial time as SNAP households have seen a significant cut in monthly allotments this past year. This program will provide additional relief to help many families purchase nutritious foods, which helps lower the risk of serious health-related issues for Chicago's West Side residents."

### **About Wellness West**

Wellness West is the coming together of proven, well-respected hospitals, community health centers, community behavioral health centers and social service organizations on the West Side. Through this collaboration, Wellness West is creating a transformational continuity of care, to address some of the most pressing health issues such as hypertension, diabetes, severe mental illness and substance use disorder. The program is focused on the vulnerable populations within ten key zip codes on the West Side and takes a holistic approach by addressing all the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) a person may face, including food insecurity. Wellness West is funded by an initiative of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services to invest in closing gaps in care and increasing health equity for Illinois. For more information, visit [www.wellnesswest.org](http://www.wellnesswest.org).

### **About Instacart**

Instacart, the leading grocery technology company in North America, works with grocers and retailers to transform how people shop. The company partners with more than 1,400 national, regional, and local retail banners to facilitate online shopping, delivery and pickup services from more than 80,000 stores across North America on the Instacart Marketplace. Instacart makes it possible for millions of people to get the groceries they need from the retailers they love, and for approximately 600,000 Instacart shoppers to earn by picking, packing and delivering orders on their own flexible schedule. The Instacart Platform offers retailers a suite of enterprise-grade technology products and services to power their e-commerce experiences, fulfill orders, digitize brick-and-mortar stores, provide advertising services, and glean insights. With Instacart Ads, thousands of CPG brands – from category leaders to emerging brands – partner with the company to connect directly with consumers online, right at the point of purchase. With Instacart Health, the company is providing tools to increase nutrition security, make healthy choices easier for consumers, and expand the role that food can play in improving health outcomes. For more information, visit [www.instacart.com/company](http://www.instacart.com/company), and to start shopping, visit [www.instacart.com](http://www.instacart.com).

<sup>1</sup> Based on the number of people in the U.S. enrolled in SNAP (USDA) in 2022. Instacart estimate (as of July 2023) based on the number of EBT SNAP households in areas serviced by EBT SNAP-enabled retailers on Instacart.

<sup>2</sup> "Hunger in Our Community: A Spring 2022 Status Report," Greater Chicago Food Depository. [https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022\\_HungerInOurCommunity-Spring-FINAL.pdf](https://www.chicagosfoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2022_HungerInOurCommunity-Spring-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Food Deserts / Access & Health / Food Empowerment Project (undated). Retrieved Sept. 27, 2023, from <https://foodispower.org/access-health/food-deserts/>

<sup>4</sup> Based on Wellness West's internal research.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson Steeves, E., DeWitt, E., Gillespie, R., Trude, A., Gustafson, A., "Barriers and facilitators to online grocery shopping among Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participants: A Mixed Method Study". Ecology of Food and Nutrition, accepted for publication 2022. <https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/NKH-Instacart-Online-Shopping-Micro-Report-v2.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Good Food for All in Indianapolis - Research Conducted by Altarum about the Effectiveness of Produce Incentives. August, 2023. <https://www.ahealthieramerica.org/indyresearch>



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