



OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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ACQUISITION
AND SUSTAINMENT

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CYBER
COMMAND (ATTN: ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE)
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS
COMMAND (ATTN: ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE)
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES TRANSPORTATION
COMMAND (ATTN: ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
(PROCUREMENT)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
(PROCUREMENT)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
(CONTRACTING)
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: 2022 National Disability Employment Awareness Month Observance and the AbilityOne® Program

The Department of Defense (DoD) is a steadfast leader in providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Each October, the President signs a proclamation in observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This year's Federal NDEAM theme "Disability: Part of the Equity Equation," announced by the Department of Labor, recognizes the vital role in which people with disabilities contribute to our Nation's diverse and inclusive workforce. Additional information may be viewed at the Federal NDEAM webpage at <<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam>>.

NDEAM gives us the opportunity to highlight talents and skills of the workers in the AbilityOne Program, which is the largest source of employment for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities. The DoD Contracting workforce supports the AbilityOne employment mission through the procurement of products and services in compliance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 8.7. The Department continues to be the lead customer of the Program, procuring more than \$2.3 billion of AbilityOne products and services in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. Today, nearly 35,000 individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities perform work on DoD contracts with 472 community-based nonprofit agencies (NPAs) across the country. Approximately 7,000 veterans work at the AbilityOne NPAs, to include 3,000 wounded, ill or injured veterans. The NPAs also employ military spouses.

AbilityOne employees are a vital segment of our defense workforce and they contribute to military readiness in many ways to include sewing personal protective items, producing uniforms worn by our Armed Forces, operating more than 150 Base Supply Centers (BSCs), providing food services at base installation dining facilities, performing administrative contract closeout services, providing custodial services in military medical treatment facilities and buildings, and by manufacturing critical products.

NDEAM is also a reminder of the responsibilities for senior leaders and the acquisition workforce to create more employment opportunities for people with disabilities. During the past year, DoD's Component AbilityOne Representatives (ABORs) have been implementing their strategic plans to increase AbilityOne Program participation in contracting. The ABOR Program has created a fundamental shift in the AbilityOne Program by creating advocates in Federal agencies and across the Department. Of significance and consistent with the NDEAM theme, the ABOR Program is one of ten initiatives included in the Defense Equity Plan dated January 2022, that implements the Executive Order 13985 "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government."

The Department's Contracting workforce is critical to expanding business with the AbilityOne Program. There are a number of actions each of us can implement that will create jobs for individuals with disabilities.

- I ask all of you to assist the ABORs in their efforts to identify new product lines and services to add to the AbilityOne Procurement List. The ABORs are working closely with the AbilityOne Central Nonprofit Agencies, Source America and National Industries for the Blind, to match capabilities and capacity with DoD requirements.
- In the area of training, I encourage Contracting professionals and the ABORs to complete the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Continuous Learning Module 023, "DAU AbilityOne Training." Of interest, DAU recently added AbilityOne to the acquisition planning step on the Contracting Subway map, which may be viewed at: <https://www.dau.edu/tools/Pages/ContractingSubwayMap.aspx>.
- Contracting and requirements officials should review solicitation documents as required by FAR Subpart 39.2, which implements section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, to confirm that section 508 accessibility standards are appropriately considered and clearly stated in Information and Communication Technology acquisitions. Compliance with section 508 accessibility standards in applicable acquisitions is needed in order for employees who are blind or visually impaired to work in knowledge-based jobs. Section 508 information and training may be viewed at <https://www.section508.gov/>.
- As prescribed in FAR 8.005, insert the clause 52.208-9, Contractor Use of Mandatory Sources of Supply and Services, in solicitations and contracts, which will require a contractor to provide supplies or services for Government use that are on the AbilityOne Procurement List.
- Utilize the BSCs for office supplies, cleaning products, and general maintenance and repair items. Our continued partnership with AbilityOne will facilitate a viable and successful BSC Program and sustain critical jobs for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

- When a determination is made to outsource contract closeout work, contracting officials are reminded to contact National Industries for the Blind to use the Contract Management Services (CMS) contract that is on the Procurement List. The CMS program provides DoD customers with an integrated suite of services to include non-inherently governmental functions in support of administrative contract closeout services, digital imaging of contracts, and document destruction. In FY 2022, the CMS program employed 142 people, including 101 individuals who are blind and 15 service-disabled veterans.

During the observance of NDEAM, I want to express appreciation to the DoD Contracting workforce and ABORs for their leadership in creating new and innovative prime contract and subcontracting opportunities with the AbilityOne Program. Through our team effort, the AbilityOne Program has an optimistic future, and veterans and individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities will have a greater opportunity to work and lead independent lives in their communities while contributing to the defense mission.

My senior staff lead for AbilityOne procurement policy is Ms. Susan Pollack who may be contacted at susan.w.pollack.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

John M. Tenaglia
Principal Director,
Defense Pricing and Contracting