



ACQUISITION
AND SUSTAINMENT

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

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: National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the AbilityOne[®] Program

Each year, the President signs a proclamation in observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This year not only marks the 75th observance of NDEAM, but also commemorates the 30th anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act. The Federal NDEAM theme, "Increasing Access and Opportunity," emphasizes increased access and opportunity in the workplace for people with disabilities. Observed each October, NDEAM is an excellent time to recognize the workers in the AbilityOne Program, which is one of the largest sources of employment in the Nation for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities.

The Department of Defense (DoD) continues to be the lead customer of the AbilityOne Program, procuring more than \$2.3 billion of products and services in FY 2020. Today, nearly 35,000 individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities perform work on DoD contracts with approximately 500 community-based nonprofit agencies across the country. The DoD contracting workforce supports the AbilityOne employment mission through the procurement of products and services in compliance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation subpart 8.7.

AbilityOne companies and workforce have proven to be a vital segment of the defense industrial base. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, DoD contracting professionals have processed 600 contract actions, valued at \$43 million, with AbilityOne companies. These companies increased surge capacity to manufacture and deliver critical products and to maintain essential services to support the ongoing COVID-19 national emergency response. AbilityOne workers have been on the front lines of defense to keep our workforce safe and buildings operational. Employees who are blind and visually impaired, or who have significant disabilities, are sewing and delivering high-demand items such as masks, gowns, and military uniforms, and helped load meals into the USNS *Comfort* for its mission support to the pandemic response in New York City. AbilityOne employees with disabilities are working extra shifts to

produce hand-sanitizers, construction kits, and Personal Protective Equipment, and to provide laundry and deep-cleaning disinfecting services for military hospitals.

The Section 898 Panel on Department of Defense and AbilityOne Contracting Oversight, Accountability, and Integrity, established by the National Defense Authorization Act of FY 2017 (Pub. L. 114-328), submitted recommendations to Congress that are in various stages of implementation. One Panel recommendation is for DoD Components to establish an AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) Program based on the Air Force ABOR initiative, involving a strategic plan and data driven approach, and includes a procurement goal for growth in AbilityOne Program participation. As the Chair of the Panel, and in recognition of NDEAM, I am directing DoD Components to establish an AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) Program with a target implementation date of October 1, 2021. My office, in collaboration with the U.S. AbilityOne Commission and the Air Force, will host an initial planning meeting in January 2021.

Additionally, contracting professionals are encouraged to take the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Continuous Learning Module (CLM) 023, "DAU AbilityOne Training," to meet continuous learning requirements. Over 90,000 individuals in DoD, Federal agencies, and industry have completed the training since deployment of the updated CLM 023 in May 2018. This training is educating the workforce about the AbilityOne Program and will help ensure the DoD continues to lead efforts to create job opportunities for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities.

During NDEAM, we express appreciation to the incredibly talented AbilityOne employees for their dedication in service to the defense mission, especially during these unprecedented times. I also commend the contracting workforce for their leadership in facilitating new prime contract opportunities with the AbilityOne Program. Through our team effort, veterans and individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities will have a greater opportunity to work, lead independent lives, contribute to military readiness, and add to the strength of our Nation's economy.

My senior staff lead for AbilityOne procurement policy is Ms. Susan Pollack who may be contacted at 571-309-8525 or susan.w.pollack.civ@mail.mil.

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