



## Inclusion Is Powered by AbilityOne

America celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) every October. For 2021, the NDEAM theme is "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion." It recognizes the invaluable contributions people with disabilities make to our nation's workforce and the economy. The AbilityOne® Program is propelling that growth by creating jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including veterans, across our nation.

### What Is the AbilityOne Program?

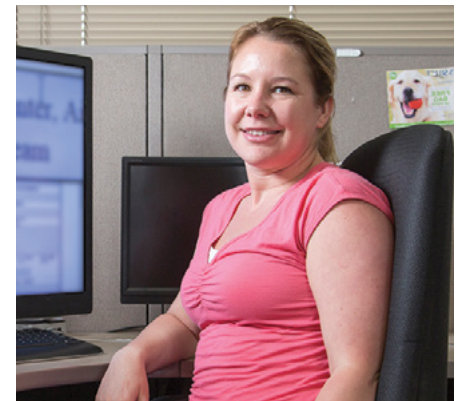
The AbilityOne Program is among the largest sources of employment in the United States for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities. Established in 1938, the Program is administered by the U.S. AbilityOne Commission®, an independent Federal agency (whose statutory name is the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled). The Commission has designated National Industries for the Blind and SourceAmerica® as the central nonprofit agencies facilitating the Program.

### AbilityOne at a Glance

- Employs more than 42,000 people who are blind or have significant disabilities, including approximately 3,200 veterans. An estimated 35,000 AbilityOne employees work on [Department of Defense \(DoD\)](#) contracts.
- Operates nationwide with nearly 500 nonprofit agencies working at more than 1,000 locations representing 40 government agencies.
- Supplied \$3.9 billion in products and services to the Federal Government in FY2020.
- Supplies more than \$2.3 billion in products and services annually to DoD, the largest customer of the AbilityOne Program.

### Did You Know?

- AbilityOne's essential workforce is an indispensable part of America's response to the COVID-19 crisis.
  - AbilityOne continues to staff critical, uninterrupted services including dining facilities and switchboard operations at military bases and VA medical facilities.
  - AbilityOne employees clean and sanitize Federal buildings, including the Pentagon and military hospitals.
  - Nonprofit agencies manufacture urgently needed hand sanitizer and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including masks and gowns.
- An AbilityOne-participating nonprofit maintains the Congressional phone line for sensitive calls from Senators, Representatives and other dignitaries.
- AbilityOne is the secure mailroom "Vendor of Choice" for the Department of Homeland Security and the Internal Revenue Service.
- AbilityOne supplies the gloves used by Transportation Security Administration agents in airport security.
- Calls to the U.S. Passport Call Center toll-free number are handled by AbilityOne.



*Kirby Hough is a Contact Services Center Team Lead at [Alphapointe](#), a Kansas City-based AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agency that is a leader for vision rehabilitation, education and advocacy.*

**October 2021 marks the one-year anniversary of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy memo on ["Increasing the Participation of Americans with Disabilities in Federal Contracting."](#)**

**Executive Orders issued by President Biden affirm the importance of leveraging acquisition as a catalyst, particularly in providing employment opportunities and economic justice for historically underserved populations, including people with disabilities.**

### More Information

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### Key Websites

**U.S. AbilityOne Commission**  
[www.AbilityOne.gov](http://www.AbilityOne.gov)

**National Industries for the Blind**  
[www.NIB.org](http://www.NIB.org)

**SourceAmerica**  
[www.SourceAmerica.org](http://www.SourceAmerica.org)



# National Disability Employment Awareness Month

## America's Recovery Is Powered by Inclusion



### How are Federal customers helping to power America's economic recovery?

- Every new AbilityOne contract creates jobs for people who are blind or have significant disabilities.
- The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) encouraged Federal Government agencies to pledge to devote at least 1% of contract spend to AbilityOne products and services in FY 2021, with a further goal of increasing spend to 1.5% in FY 2022.
- This pledge could create tens of thousands of new jobs for years to come for individuals who are blind or have significant disabilities—providing critical help to a chronically underserved and underemployed population, while helping to support America's economic recovery.

The [OFPP memo](#) is addressed to Chief Acquisition Officers and Senior Procurement Executives, and:

- Acknowledges the contributions of Americans with disabilities to our country's economic strength.
- Commits to furthering their participation in the workforce.
- Creates a stronger pathway for the increased participation of persons with disabilities in Federal contracting through the AbilityOne Program.
- Seeks to promote greater awareness and use within the Federal acquisition workforce of other Federal programs that facilitate employment of persons with disabilities.

### AbilityOne Representatives

- An AbilityOne Representative (ABOR) program created by the OFPP memo has made significant progress in areas including training, monthly meetings and developing strategic plans.
- AbilityOne Representatives:
  - Advocate Federal buying in accordance with mandatory source contracting procedures.
  - Engage with the workforce to build use of the AbilityOne Program.
  - Offer feedback to the U.S. AbilityOne Commission to improve the value of the AbilityOne Program.
  - Create opportunity for people who are blind or have significant disabilities in the Federal marketplace, beginning with heightened management promotion and workforce attention on the AbilityOne Program.



## Mission Moment

As our nation commemorates NDEAM, join AbilityOne in celebrating the employees who are blind or have significant disabilities who are helping power our nation's economic recovery, and the Federal customers of the AbilityOne Program who make it possible.

### Larry Robinson

Nobis Enterprises, Inc.  
Marietta, Georgia

Larry Robinson spent 21 years in the United States Army, serving as a noncommissioned officer and earning a Purple Heart for injuries sustained in Iraq. His military experiences provide the foundation for his leadership as a general clerk at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where he has worked for six years.