



National
Disability
Employment
Awareness
Month



AbilityOne

AbilityOne

PROGRAM



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AbilityOne

National Disability
Employment
Awareness Month

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Planning AbilityOne Celebration Activities





Planning AbilityOne Celebration Activities

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) provides the perfect opportunity for community-based nonprofit agencies to recognize the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), employees and federal customers at government agencies and military installations across the United States.

We encourage you to:

- Highlight your support for the AbilityOne Program.
- Demonstrate Program support and educate the general public, local businesses, civic leaders, strategic partners, potential customers, potential employees and the media year round about the purpose, capabilities and benefits of the AbilityOne Program.

Suggested National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities

- Host a tour/open house of your local nonprofit agency
 - Invite local and state dignitaries, media, and business and community leaders to attend.
 - Use AbilityOne resources, including videos, brochures/publications and speakers, are all available free of charge from NISH and NIB (see contact info below).
 - Invite federal officials to meet your staff and learn more about your capabilities.
- Speak with your local media outlets to obtain public service time [radio] or space [newspaper or local business journal]. Sample print ad and suggested local radio copy are included in this kit.
- Plan an "AbilityOne Customer Appreciation Day" at your federal customer's location.
 - Present certificates or other recognition items to the Secretary, Commanding Officer, Procurement Executive, Contracting Officer, Purchase Card Coordinator or other appropriate federal official in honor of their support.
 - Contact the agency or installation Public Affairs Office to provide coverage of the presentation for agency/base newspapers and magazines.
- Send thank you notes to your federal customers during this special month.
- Invite a locally elected public official to give a speech at your facility.

- Host an AbilityOne Vendor Fair to showcase your AbilityOne product and service capabilities. Invite your federal customers and other local AbilityOne-participating nonprofit agencies to attend and/or exhibit.
- Consider special events to celebrate significant milestones, such as business anniversaries, as well as business achievements and accolades, including new contract signings, awards, new strategic partners, civic initiatives and ground-breaking at your physical plant.
- Send a letter to the supervisors of the contracting officers and/or purchase card holders who are strong supporters of the AbilityOne Program, recognizing them for their efforts to create employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.
- Recommend a federal customer, senator or representative to NIB or NISH to be named an "AbilityOne Champion" and host an event if/when the nominee is inducted as a Champion.

The following tactics will be helpful if you plan to host or coordinate an event:

- Write and distribute a Media Alert (Instructions for Media Alerts are included in this kit.) notifying the media of the date, time, location and purpose of your event. Be sure to include the names of any special guests, such as the mayor or governor.
- Follow all the recommended guidelines for securing pre- and post-event media coverage. (Instructions are included in this kit.)
- Link your website to the AbilityOne Web site (www.abilityone.gov) and/or design a page of your own listing ways your agency can support the AbilityOne Program.
- Hang posters and decorate bulletin boards with AbilityOne Program information.

For assistance in planning AbilityOne Celebration Activities, contact

NISH
 Lynne Harris
 571.226.4530
 lharris@nish.org

NIB
 Kim Zimmer
 703.310.0563
 kzimmer@nib.org



Wednesday, October 17 is Disability Mentoring Day

Disability Mentoring Day promotes career development for students and jobseekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration. It is designed to help local communities throughout the country organize their own activities to bring students and employers together for information sessions about career opportunities and one-on-one mentoring with volunteers at public and private places of employment.

It is designed to benefit from local creativity, with each community planning activities to best suit the interests and abilities of its students, jobseekers and local employers. Although the core experience is one-on-one job shadowing, event planners may choose to open with a meeting for a group of students and job seekers featuring several presentations and/or close with a reception where student, job seekers and mentors can share their experiences. The type of mentoring experience will largely depend on the participants' interests, education level and work experience. Job seekers can focus on specific career advice and discuss potential internships and job openings.

Leadership and coordination is provided through the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD). AAPD has local coordinators throughout the country, who play a match-making role between students/jobseekers and local employers. All information can be found at www.dmd-aapd.org.

We encourage you to reach out to your community on this special day and help promote communication, education and special one-on-one mentoring. We are all working toward the shared goal of employment for people who are blind or have a severe disability.

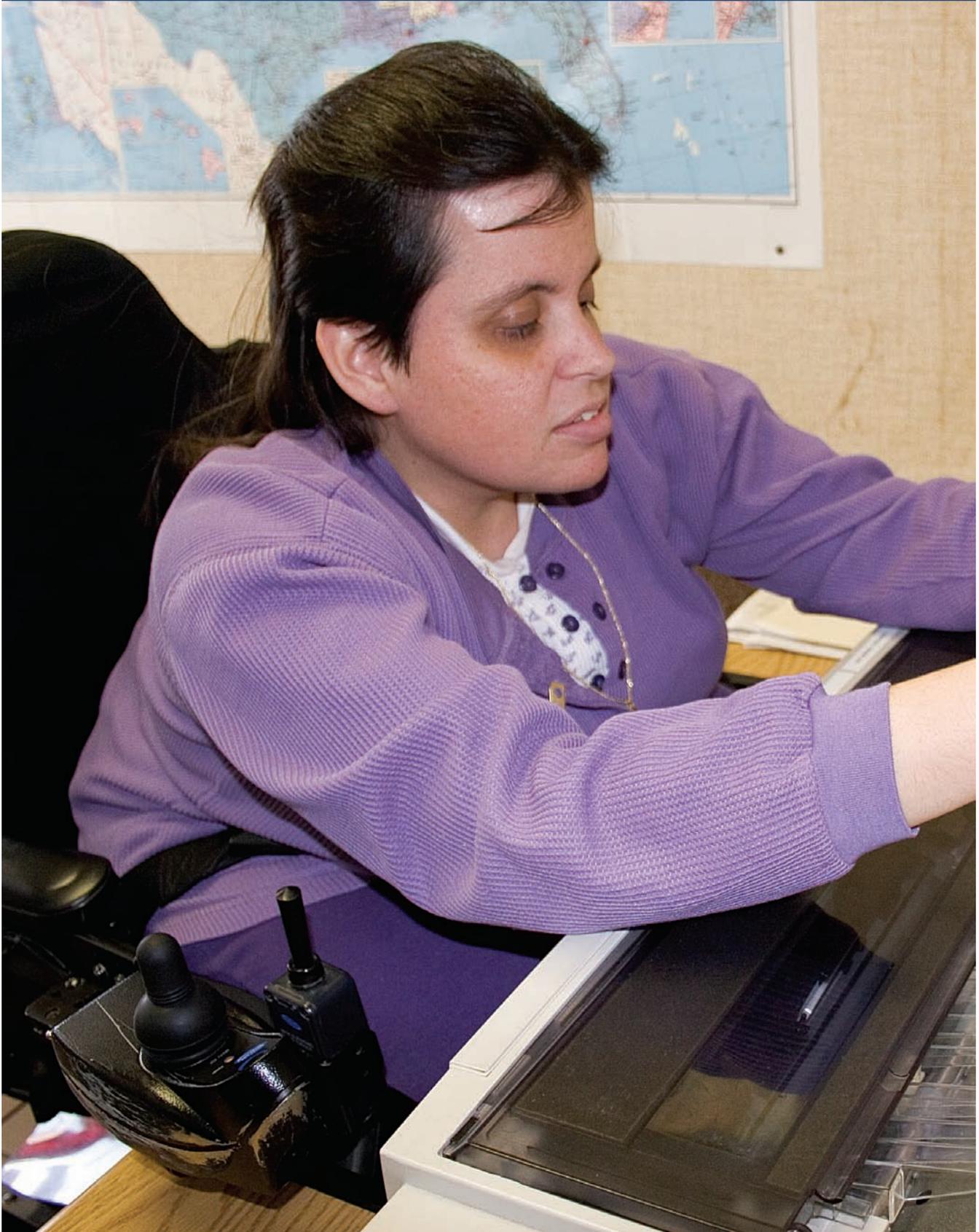
Best regards,

Lauren White
President
National Association for
the Employment of People
Who Are Blind (NAEPB)

Paul Atkinson
President
National Council of Work Centers (NCWC)

Getting in the News

Sample Communication Tools





Getting in the News

Sample Communication Tools

Getting in the News

The annual celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October presents a unique and timely opportunity to leverage your local news media to raise public awareness and support for the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), people who are blind and have other severe disabilities, and the agencies and individuals who champion the program. In addition, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, new contracts, anniversaries, awards presentations and other similar events provide opportunities not only for October but also throughout the entire year for raising media and public awareness of the AbilityOne Program.

The news media can help ensure and promote the continued success of the AbilityOne Program, new business opportunities and the expansion of job opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Feature stories will also:

- Showcase the AbilityOne Program and its economic and social impact on the lives of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in your region
- Spotlight your agency
- Identify public policymakers who support the AbilityOne Program
- Recognize local AbilityOne champions

We encourage you to use the enclosed materials to educate thousands of people in your community about the AbilityOne Program, the support provided by your federal customers and the benefits of employing individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

While the tools in this section focus primarily on National Disability Employment Awareness Month, they can be used as templates year round. For assistance with modifying the enclosed documents, please contact NISH Corporate Communications Director Lynne Harris at lharris@nish.org or 571.226.4530; or NIB Vice President, Corporate Communications Kim Zimmer at kzimmer@nib.org or 703.310.0563

Your Information is Valuable

You are a valuable source to your local news media. You are the resident expert on the issue of creating job opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. You can educate news reporters about your agency, the AbilityOne Program and your availability as the leading educational resource.

These materials are designed to help you use that expertise to become a better resource for the media. By doing so, you will almost certainly bring more exposure to your organization, raise public awareness of the AbilityOne Program and educate your community about the critical need to provide more employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

Following is information about:

- How to Work with the News Media—General “dos and don’ts”
- Who to Contact, When & How—Creating news media contact lists, understanding a reporter’s deadlines and tips for working with all the different types of news media (i.e. newspapers, radio, TV, etc.)
- Media Events—How to host a well-attended event
- Special Events—What are they?
- Internet and Websites—How to use them to your advantage

The kit contains samples of the typical media tools you will need, including:

✓ **Key Messages**—Key messages are the core of what you communicate to the news media. Typically, they are strong headlines of information that are supported by facts. They should appear throughout your media materials and be repeated during an interview with a reporter to convince and excite them to publish a story about your agency, the AbilityOne Program and NDEAM. You also might consider keeping a library of key messages specific to your agency. You can do this by answering the following questions in one or two sentences.



- What does your community need to know, believe and care about to become engaged with your organization and the issue of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities?
- What obstacles or misconceptions must you overcome to engage the community?
- What needs to happen, or what do people need to do, to meet your organization's goals or have an impact on your business and work with people who are blind or have other severe disabilities?
- If people did what you wished, how would things be different at your agency?

✓ **Frequently Asked Questions (and Answers)**—Documents prepared for you and for the news media that answer many of the questions a reporter is likely to pose about your agency and the AbilityOne Program.

✓ **Sample Media Alerts**—Like a news release, a media alert also presents information to the news media but in a very short “who, what, when, where, why and how” format. Typically, it is used to promote an upcoming media event, such as a special event at your agency that news media representatives are invited to attend—for example, the recognition of an employee or a news conference. It should state clearly the time, location and purpose of your event. See the sample media alert on page 15.

✓ **Sample Letters to the Editor**—A well-reasoned, carefully written letter to the editor can be very influential in shaping public debate and raising awareness about your organization's point of view. Before writing a letter to the editor, call the editor, explain what you'd like to submit and ask if it will be considered for publication. Get instructions about length and other submission criteria. The letter to the editor should:

- Be substantial, thoughtful and focused.
- State the letter's purpose in the first one or two sentences.
- Include content that is short and to the point.

When submitting a letter to the editor, include phone and fax numbers and an e-mail address where the writer can be reached. See the sample letter to the editor on page 16.

✓ **Sample News Release**—A news release is simply the presentation of your “key messages” to the news media in a concise, standard format for reporters and editors. The news release is one of the most commonly used media tools to “get the word out.” Most news outlets use news releases for background information when writing a story. In some cases, a news release merely catches an editor's attention so that a reporter is assigned to the story, but some publications reprint news releases verbatim. If you are hosting an event, you should send out a media alert (see example) before and a news release after the event. This will allow reporters to cover the event even if they weren't present. For reporters who were present at the event, it gives them quick access to details they may have missed. Whenever possible, you should:

- Provide a high-resolution photograph with caption
- Create a provocative headline
- Include a colorful quote in the second or third paragraphs
- Provide as many answers as possible to logical questions about who, what, when where, why and how
- Format release clearly—type, double space and limit to two pages

See the sample news release on page 17.

✓ **Sample Print Ads**—Promote NDEAM during the month of October with these print ads or take it a step further and include NDEAM event information specific to your organization. If you are interested in using these ads, please contact Paula Scanlon at 703-584-3985, or pscanlon@nish.org. See the sample print ads on page 18.

✓ **Sample Public Service Announcements (PSAs)**—PSAs are brief radio scripts that are broadcast free of charge by a radio station. They run no more than 30 seconds in length when read aloud and state your “key messages” about the AbilityOne Program, NDEAM and the work of your agency. PSAs should be sent to your local radio outlets with a one-page letter requesting airtime. It is recommended that you send different versions of the radio script so that the station can choose which version best fits its programming and timing needs. See the sample PSAs on page 19.



✓ **Sample Secretary’s Announcement**—An announcement from the Secretary of your federal agency shows high-level support of the AbilityOne Program and educates a large number of federal employees about their purchasing and procurement responsibilities under the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act. For more information about products and services that are contracted by your agency, contact Stephanie Lesko at (703) 603-7740 or abilityoneworks@abilityone.gov. See the sample secretary’s announcement on page 20.

How to Work with the News Media

General “Dos & Don’ts”

Not every news release or event will make the news, but every time you talk to a reporter, you have an opportunity to increase that person’s understanding of the issues relating to people who are blind or have other severe disabilities and the AbilityOne Program. Reporters change beats and organizations regularly. Keeping in touch and educating newcomers to your issues is valuable.

DO: Keep it Simple

- Never assume a reporter and his or her audience have the same level of understanding as you do about your workplace or the AbilityOne Program.
- Always shorten your messages to the simplest communication possible.

Do: Build Relationships

- Let reporters hear from you regularly. This helps you establish a relationship and credibility.
- Make a list of local reporters to contact.
- Write or call them to introduce yourself and your organization.
- Follow up periodically to provide updates on issues.
- Give them a heads-up on a story that may be breaking locally or in D.C.
- Suggest story ideas.

Do: Be Familiar with the News Outlet BEFORE making contact

- Journalists appreciate that you’ve taken time to review their work.

- Ensures that your story idea falls into their area of expertise.

Do: Use News “Hooks”

- Information becomes more enticing with a “news hook” to hang it on. NDEAM in October and celebrating the AbilityOne Program are both good news “hooks.”

Do: Use Pictures

- Action photographs of your employees on the job add substantially to the story appeal.
- If possible, advise the media outlets that digital photography is available via e-mail upon request. (Note: Given the prevalence of computer viruses, most newsrooms won’t open unsolicited e-mail attachments.)

DO: Respond Quickly to All Media Inquiries

- Requirement for good relationship with reporters especially since they are typically working under tight deadlines.
- You can then gauge the nature of their request and a timetable for addressing it, if you choose to participate. (Note: Not all media inquiries are positive in nature.) They will appreciate your courtesy and attentiveness and will likely call again in the future.

Do: Volunteer to Get Additional Information Reporters Need

- If general industry or agency information is requested, offer to make a few calls and see if you can find it. Or suggest other organizations and resources that the reporter can tap into, such as NIB or NISH.

DON’T: Use Industry or Technical Jargon

- Keep all media materials and interviews free of technical terms, jargon or acronyms common only to your line of work.

DON’T: Bother Reporters on Deadline.

DON’T: Use “No Comment” to a Question.

- It’s a negative (if not self-incriminating) response. Instead, explain why you cannot comment, for example: “I cannot speak for that group, but our own position is...”



DON'T: Ask Reporters to See Copies of Their Stories in Advance

Who to Contact & How

Creating & Maintaining Contact Lists

The first step in contacting your local news media is creating an up-to-date list of reporters and radio and TV producers. Your news media contact list is your most valuable asset. Check with the main public library in your state's capital for a directory of key reporters or search the Internet. Most publications have websites with editorial staff listings and contact information.

Take the time to draw up an address and phone list of newspaper reporters and editors in your region, as well as regional magazines, radio and television stations. In a pinch, you can simply pull out the local phone book, call each outlet, and ask who would be the correct reporter or editor to contact about stories relating to the employment of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Once your list is complete, keep it current.

Reporters and editors change jobs frequently, so list maintenance will be crucial. Ideally, your news media contact list should include:

- Type of media (newspaper, newswire, magazine, radio, TV, Internet, etc.)
- Contact title (reporter, editor, producer, etc.)
- Contact name
- Phone number (main phone number for the organization and the direct telephone—if available—of the individual contact)
- Fax number
- E-mail
- Website of organization
- Notes:
 - When is the contact on deadline?
 - What days and hours does the contact work?
 - How does the contact prefer to receive information—fax, mail or e-mail? When did you last talk on the phone?
 - When did you last send the contact media information?

How to Make Contact

The best ways to contact reporters about a story are by faxing and e-mailing media information (such as a media alert or a news release) and then following up by phone. Never assume that faxing or e-mailing information alone is enough. Reporters are very busy and constantly scanning reams of information throughout the day; therefore, you should follow up by phone within 24 hours after you distribute your media materials.

Media Events

The first rule concerning media events or news conferences is: "DON'T ABUSE THEM!" Hosting too frequent or inconsequential news conferences will cause reporters to shy away from attending your next media event. Both location and time should make life easy for the reporter. Hold your event early in the day to give reporters time to prepare a piece for the evening news or the next day's newspaper. By starting early, you increase the chance of seeing your story run on one of the state or national newswires (e.g. the Associated Press) or through Internet media outlets during the day, which may prompt phone calls from news outlets that failed to attend your event.

Newswire services have "daybooks" that list significant daily local news at least a day in advance. If you're planning a media event, be sure to get listed on the daybook by sending your media alert a week in advance and then following up with a phone call two days before the event to confirm your alert will be listed.

For TV cameras, the location would ideally be outdoors and special attention would be paid to "setting the stage" and providing interesting images—for example, a highly visual backdrop for your spokesperson.

If logistics favor an indoor news conference you will need:

- A quiet room large enough to handle the number of reporters you expect
- A podium or center stage area of some sort with a public-address system if the room is large
- A media table with information and a sign-in sheet for the reporters who attend



- Adequate, well-spaced seating with a wide area behind and on sides for cameras
- Electrical outlets for radio and TV equipment
- Internet access for computer connection

Special Events that Educate Reporters

Events designed around a public activity provide an opportunity for education, media coverage and attracting new business. For example, a one-day open house of your facility during which you provide guided tours and individual interviews with managers and employees at your agency has good media potential for photos, videotape and “real people” interviews. It also gives you a platform to discuss the AbilityOne Program, the barriers people who are blind or have other severe disabilities face in securing steady employment, and the jobs provided by your federal contracts.

The Internet and Your Website

The Internet is strongly utilized by the news media to research and retrieve information. It is the single largest source of information available anywhere in the world and, from a reporter’s perspective, is absolutely vital. Today, hosting a website that contains key facts and background information about your agency is easy and inexpensive. To help establish and maintain relationships with your local news media, it is highly recommended that you establish an organizational website. It should contain all the information you present in your annual report as well as pertinent sales information about the products and/or services you provide. Be sure to set up an area on your website entitled “newsroom.” It should contain a copy of all news releases as well as information about the individuals at your agency who reporters should contact for information or interviews.



Introduction

An official proclamation from your governor or mayor is a formal acknowledgment of the AbilityOne Program and the services your organization provides in your community. Although proclamations take time to plan, the resulting publicity will increase public awareness about the Program. It is also a good way to involve your board of directors in a community project.

Proclamations accomplish the following:

- Add credibility to the AbilityOne Program.
- Provide hard news about the Program, particularly if the proclamation signing is scheduled as a news conference or media event.

How to Request a Proclamation

- Contact your governor's or mayor's respective offices and speak with the Public Affairs Office. (Although we are providing a Sample Proclamation for you to share with them, the governor and/or mayor may have a staff member write the actual proclamation.)
- Have at least a month's lead time before you actually need the proclamation.
- Request a photo opportunity with the governor or mayor so they may present the proclamation.
- Schedule a news conference, in coordination with the Public Affairs Office, as an effective way to obtain publicity.
- Include AbilityOne Program employees at the presentation or news conference in addition to the CEO/executive director of your agency and/or members of your board of directors.
- Send a Media Alert to all the news outlets in your community, print, television, radio and Internet. A sample is included in these materials.

Follow-Up

- Send to local papers during National Disability Employment Awareness Month along with a copy of the proclamation and a news release.
- Announce the proclamation in your news release. Small newspapers in particular will often run an article about proclamations if you include enough background information.
- Send a brief thank you note to your elected official.



Sample Proclamation

PROCLAMATION

CELEBRATING THE ABILITYONE (FORMERLY JWOD) PROGRAM DURING NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

AbilityOne Week

WHEREAS, the AbilityOne Program provides nearly 48,000 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities with rehabilitation, training and job coaching necessary to receive good wages and benefits and gain greater independence and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the AbilityOne Program empowers people who are blind or have other severe disabilities who traditionally face a dismal 38 percent employment rate and rely heavily on social support programs; and

WHEREAS, through the AbilityOne Program, community-based nonprofit organizations such as [Your agency name] provide employment opportunities to people who are blind or have other severe disabilities while providing a wide array of quality, goods and services to the federal government at a fair price; and

WHEREAS, by employing people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, the AbilityOne Program is able to help these individuals enjoy more fully participation in their communities, market their AbilityOne skills into other public and private sector jobs, and create and sustain employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, in [Insert City/State name] the [Insert the name of participating organization(s)] provide(s) employment opportunities and training for [Insert number of people employed] people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, enabling them to lead more productive and meaningful lives, provide support for their families and develop skills necessary for long-term employment; and

WHEREAS, [Insert City/State name] recognizes the important contributions of [Insert your organization] to [Insert City/State name] and its citizens;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [Name of Mayor/Governor], Mayor/Governor of [Insert City/State name], and on behalf of [Insert City/State name], do hereby proclaim [dates], as;

AbilityOne Week

in [Insert City/State name] and hereby commend all persons who are committed to and work toward enhancing employment opportunities for people with visual and other severe disabilities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of [Insert City/State name] to be affixed this [Insert date] 2007.

[Name of Mayor/Governor]—Mayor/Governor



[To be sent on your agency letterhead]

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Contact name/title]

Phone: [Phone number]

Fax: [Fax number]

E-mail: [Email address]

[Agency name] Honors [Employee name] in Celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wager-O'Day (JWOD)

WHAT: [Name of agency] will honor the professional accomplishments of [Employee name]. [He/she] has been employed at [Name of agency] for [Insert number] years as a [Title/position]. Members of the media are invited to attend this special event, take photographs or videotape, and conduct interviews. (Include the names and titles of any public policy makers or local celebrities who will be there for the celebration.)

WHO: [Your agency executive] and [Local public policy maker] will recognize [Employee name].

WHEN: [Date and time of event]

WHERE: [Location of event]

WHY: October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the perfect time to recognize the AbilityOne Program. Providing employment to nearly 48,000 individuals, the AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Without the job opportunities created by [Name of federal customer] through the AbilityOne Program, [Name of employee] could have been one of the more than 21 million people with disabilities nationwide who do not have jobs. Instead, [he/she] is gainfully employed, earning wages and benefits that help [him/her] to lead a more independent life and reduce [his/her] need for other government benefits.



Sample Letter to the Editor

(To be sent on your agency letterhead)

[Date]

[Name of editorial page editor]

[Name of publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip Code]

Dear [Insert Editor's Name]:

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the perfect time to celebrate the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD). The AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States and is a cost effective way to empower many of them to achieve greater independence by reducing dependence on government support and joining the ranks of taxpayers. However people with severe disabilities remain one of America's greatest untapped labor resources, with a dismal 38 percent employment rate.

The AbilityOne Program develops and delivers employment opportunities that provide individual choice, equitable wages and benefits, upward mobility and personal satisfaction for nearly 48,000 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. These individuals are employed by a network of more than 600 nonprofit agencies that provide a wide array of quality products and services at a fair price to federal customers. People with disabilities at these agencies are working on projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Through the AbilityOne Program, [Insert number] people who are blind or have other severe disabilities are working at [Your agency's name] in [City where agency is located].

Since [Year your agency was established], [Insert the name of your agency] has been providing vocational training and employment for people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities. Currently, [Number of people employed on AbilityOne projects] are working on AbilityOne projects in [Name of your geographical region]. People who are blind or who have other severe disabilities are working at [List where the AbilityOne projects are and what product or service is being provided].

In 1938, Congress passed the Wagner-O'Day Act, establishing a federal market for products made by people who are blind. In 1971, the Act was amended by Sen. Jacob Javits to include products and services provided by people with a wide range of severe disabilities, and became known as the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act, under which the AbilityOne Program resides. Through the AbilityOne Program, people who are blind or have other severe disabilities receive rehabilitation, training and job coaching through qualified community-based nonprofit organizations such as [Your agency name]. The results are customized solutions for the federal government and our U.S. Armed Forces, and increased financial security and personal independence for thousands of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

[Name/Signature Block]



(To be copied on your letterhead)

[Date]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Contact name/title]

Phone: [Phone number]

Fax: [Fax number]

E-mail: [E-mail address]

[Agency name] Honors [Employee name] in Celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month and the AbilityOne, formerly Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD) Program

[City, State] [Date of release]—[Employee name] was honored today by [Agency name] for [his/her] professional accomplishments as part of the AbilityOne Program in celebration of the 2007 observance of October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

[Insert quote from agency executive about honored employee.]

The AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States and is a cost effective way to empower many of these individuals to achieve greater independence by reducing dependence on government support and joining the ranks of taxpayers; however, people who are blind or have other severe disabilities remain one of America’s greatest untapped labor resources, with a dismal 38 percent employment rate.

The AbilityOne Program develops and delivers employment opportunities that provide individual choice, equitable wages and benefits, upward mobility and personal satisfaction for nearly 48,000 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. These individuals are employed by a network of more than 600 nonprofit agencies that provide a wide array of quality products and services at a fair price to federal customers. People with disabilities at these agencies are working on projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

In [Name of city/town where agency is located], [Insert number] people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities are benefiting from training and work experience at [Name of agency]. For example, [Name of employee] has been employed at [Name of agency] for [Insert number] years as a [Title/position]. Without the job opportunities created by [Name of federal customer] through the AbilityOne Program, [he/she] could have been one of the more than 21 million people with disabilities nationwide who are not working.

[Insert quote from agency employee.]

Through the AbilityOne Program, in the last fiscal year, individuals in [State name] earned approximately [Insert number from Statistics by State chart in this packet] in wages and benefits that helped them enjoy greater personal and financial independence.

In 1938, Congress passed the Wagner-O’Day Act, establishing a federal market for products made by individuals who are blind. In 1971, the Act was amended by Sen. Jacob Javits to include products and services provided by people with a wide range of severe disabilities and became known as the Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD) Act. The AbilityOne Program is a coordinated effort on behalf of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, National Industries for



the Blind (NIB) and NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities. This effort has allowed people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to acquire job skills and training, receive good wages and benefits, and gain greater independence and quality of life. Through the AbilityOne Program, people who are blind or have other severe disabilities have the opportunity to enjoy full participation in their communities and can market their AbilityOne skills into other public and private sector jobs.

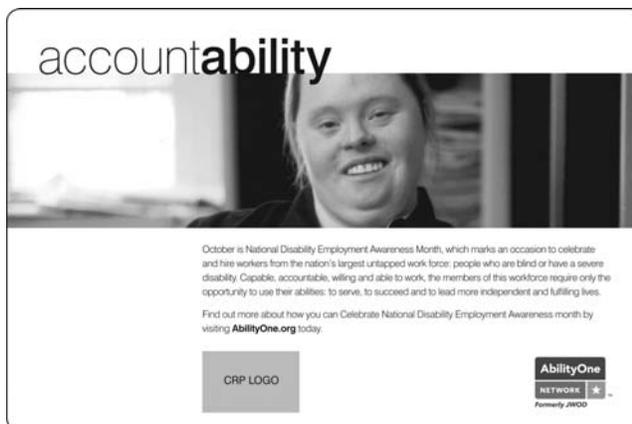
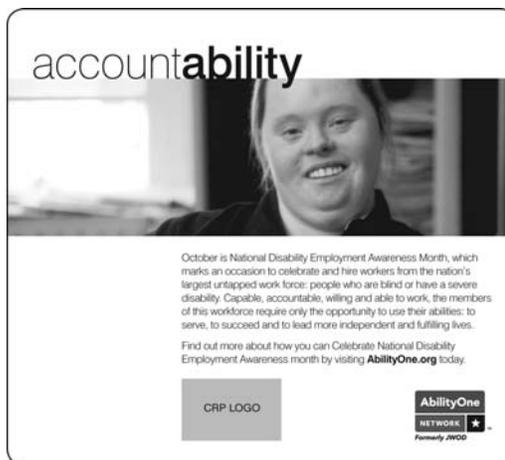


Sample Print Ads

Here are some examples of print ads that can be used in your local newspaper or business journal. Promote NDEAM during the month of October with these ads or take it a step further and include NDEAM event information specific to your organization.

If you are interested in using these ads, please contact

Paula Scanlon
703-584-3985
pscanlon@nish.org





National Disability Employment Awareness Month—October 2007

:30 second PSA

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the perfect time to celebrate the AbilityOne Program. Providing employment to nearly 48,000 people, the AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of jobs for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. However, 21 million people with disabilities remain unemployed. Through the Program, [Insert number] people who are blind or have other severe disabilities are working at [Your agency's name] in [City where agency is located]. [Insert radio station's call letters] salutes the AbilityOne Program.

:20 second PSA

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the perfect time to celebrate the AbilityOne Program, the largest single source of jobs for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. The AbilityOne Program enables nearly 48,000 people nationwide to lead more productive and independent lives. [Insert station's call letters] salutes [Insert your agency's name] and the AbilityOne Program!

:10 second PSA

In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and all people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, [Insert station's call letters] salutes [Insert your agency's name] and the AbilityOne Program.

AbilityOne Transition CD

Additionally, local nonprofit agencies will be in receipt of an AbilityOne Transition CD. We have provided a produced :60 radio spot and :30 radio spot with a music bed into which you can insert local copy.

Produced 60 second Radio Spot with :33 music bed: Recommended local copy

And we are [Insert your agency's name], serving [Insert city where agency is located] since [Insert year agency started]. We believe that work has the power to transform lives by building self-confidence, independence and friendships. A proud member of The AbilityOne Network, we employ people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, giving them the chance to make their dreams come true.

Help us celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month. To find out more about how our nation's most untapped workforce can help your organization, visit AbilityOne.org today.

Produced 30 second Radio Spot with :08 music bed: Recommended local copy

And we are [Insert your agency's name], serving [Insert city where agency is located] since [Insert year agency started].

Help us celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Visit AbilityOne.org today to learn more about helping make dreams come true.



Sample Secretary's Announcement

FEDERAL AGENCY SECRETARY'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Celebrate the AbilityOne Program during National Disability Employment Awareness Month!

For most [Name of federal agency] employees, October heralds the beginning of a new fiscal year. However, it is also National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the perfect time to celebrate the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD). Under the AbilityOne Program, Government Purchase Card users and acquisition personnel buy supplies and services furnished by nonprofit agencies employing people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities.

I am especially proud of our agency's efforts to provide employment and training opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities through our support of the AbilityOne Program. Under AbilityOne, supplies and services purchased by [Name of federal agency] and other federal agencies currently generate jobs for nearly 48,000 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. I ask all [Name of federal agency] employees to help increase this number by identifying more contracting opportunities with the AbilityOne Program.

The AbilityOne Program provides employment opportunities in local communities nationwide for a population that continues to experience an exceptionally low employment rate. Only 38 percent of people who are blind or have a severe disability are employed. The AbilityOne Program was created by Congress to help alleviate this employment inequity. The AbilityOne Program has become the largest single source of employment of Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities, by identifying federal contract work to be performed by these individuals.

President Bush cites these statistics in his New Freedom Initiative for people with disabilities, and he pledges the Administration's commitment to increasing the ability of people with disabilities to integrate into the workforce.

The major challenges to productive employment of qualified people with disabilities are attitudinal barriers and false assumptions about what people can and cannot do. What people with disabilities CAN do is be productive. Your efforts to develop awareness and to educate our workforce about this important issue will help ensure [Name of federal agency] makes an important contribution to President Bush's goal of fulfilling America's promise to people with disabilities.

The AbilityOne Program is a cost-effective way to help people who are blind or have other severe disabilities achieve greater independence and provide the federal government with a quality source of products and services. AbilityOne Program employment enables many individuals to reduce dependence on government support, join the ranks of taxpayers and contribute to the federal government's critical missions.

Please learn more about the important role you can play in the AbilityOne Program at www.abilityone.gov and make a special effort to show your support as the AbilityOne Program celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month throughout the month of October 2007.

[Name/Signature Block]





Key Messages

Concepts you can use to communicate about people who are blind or have other severe disabilities and the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD).

People who are blind or have other severe disabilities are:

- America's greatest untapped labor resource challenged by a low employment rate of 38%
- A reliable workforce who fulfill a wide array of product and service needs for federal customers and their prime contractors
- Capable of meeting or exceeding industry quality standards.

The AbilityOne Program:

- Is a public-private partnership established by Congress through which the federal government uses its acquisition policies to support employment of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.
- Is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States.
- Employs nearly 48,000 individuals at more than 600 community-based nonprofit agencies across the country.
- Leverages a national network of more than 600 participating nonprofit organizations including all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam that develop and provide an array of products and services to federal customers.
- Requires a minimum of 75 percent of each federal contract's workforce to be comprised of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.
- Reports that 76 percent of AbilityOne employees are very satisfied with their jobs and 79 percent are proud of their work. Ninety-nine percent characterized their jobs as "excellent" or "good."
- Provides an average wage of \$9.99 per hour and benefits to employees.
- Is a cost-effective way to help people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to achieve greater independence.
- Enables many individuals to reduce dependence on government support and join the ranks of taxpayers.
- Shows through recent studies in targeted business lines that there is a positive net impact of \$46.75 million to federal and state governments in both reduction of entitlements and increases of payments employees make through income and payroll taxes.
- Reports sales account for less than one percent of all federal procurement dollars spent.
- Develops and delivers employment opportunities that provide individual choice, equitable wages and benefits, upward mobility and personal satisfaction for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.
- Collaborates with its federal customers to satisfy their needs with quality products and services at fair market prices.
- Is a critical part of the U.S. military industrial base, providing support to the Warfighters and international relief through the provision of products and services.
- Is designed to minimize impact on small businesses and incumbent contractors. Of all federal contracts considered by the AbilityOne Program, tens of millions of dollars are not added to the Procurement List annually because of the potential severe adverse impact.
- Allows for a federal agency's AbilityOne spending to be removed from the total agency procurement base against which the small business percentage goal is applied. (Small Business Administration guidelines)
- Promotes integrity and good stewardship of federal contracting dollars through efficient and effective policies, procedures and processes, which will increasingly be made available on www.abilityone.gov.



Frequently Asked Questions

About the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), from a Community Perspective

What is the AbilityOne Program?

Providing employment opportunities to nearly 48,000 Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities, the AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of jobs for these individuals in the United States. The AbilityOne Program uses the purchasing power of the federal government to buy products and services from participating, community-based nonprofit agencies nationwide dedicated to training and employing individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, within which the AbilityOne Program resides, appears in Title 41 of the United States Code, Sections 46 through 48c (41 U.S.C. 46-48c). The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, an independent federal agency, administers the AbilityOne Program. To carry out its mission, the Committee works closely with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities to assist the more than 600 community-based nonprofit agencies that obtain federal contracts through the Program. The AbilityOne Program is a cost-effective way to help people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to achieve greater independence, as it enables many individuals to reduce dependence on government support and join the ranks of taxpayers. Through the AbilityOne Program, people with disabilities enjoy fuller participation in their community and can market their AbilityOne learned skills into other public and private sector jobs.

What are the advantages of the AbilityOne Program?

For AbilityOne employees who are blind or have other severe disabilities, the benefits in terms of self-esteem, value to the community, increased independence and value to their employers are beyond measure.

The AbilityOne Program is a unique program that not only benefits people who are blind or have other severe disabilities but also generates economic advantages for communities and the American taxpaying public. Working through the AbilityOne Program, thousands of people who might otherwise be solely dependent upon public assistance instead are taxpaying citizens within their communities. For the federal government, the advantage is found in the great value and quality of products and services that are available at fair prices from AbilityOne producing nonprofit agencies across the country.

Recent studies in targeted business lines found that the AbilityOne Program is saving federal and state governments more than \$46 million a year. The studies focused exclusively on AbilityOne commissary, food service and custodial programs, which collectively employ more than 10,000 people nationwide who are blind or have other severe disabilities. According to the study, the net savings to the government come from the increase in income and payroll taxes and reduction of entitlements that result from the AbilityOne commissary, food service and custodial programs.

Is the AbilityOne Program really necessary in light of the 1990 enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

Yes, the AbilityOne Program is necessary. While the landmark ADA legislation assures basic civil rights for people with disabilities, including the provision of reasonable accommodations by employers, it does not assure jobs for all people with disabilities who want to work. The AbilityOne Program was created for just this purpose—to help create employment opportunities for people who have severe disabilities and increase the dismal 38 percent employment rate facing this population. According to the 2000 Census, of the 31 million

United States residents between the ages of 21 and 64 who are blind or have other severe disabilities, nearly 21 million are not employed or underemployed.

What types of wages do AbilityOne employees earn?

On AbilityOne product contracts, employees are paid based on the prevailing industry wage for a specific locality. On AbilityOne service contracts, employees are paid in accordance with the Service Contract Act (SCA). As of FY 2006, the average hourly wage for an AbilityOne employee was \$9.99 per hour (with some AbilityOne employees earning as much as \$10 to \$14 per hour), compared to the federal minimum wage of \$5.85 per hour. AbilityOne wages allow for many people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to live more independent lives. Some AbilityOne participating nonprofit agencies hold special certificates issued by the Department of Labor to pay employees a commensurate wage (a percentage of the prevailing wage) based on employee productivity.

What types of jobs are people with disabilities performing for the federal government?

Nonprofit agencies around the country that employ people who are blind or have other severe disabilities are supplying a wide array of high-quality products, including office supplies under the SKILCRAFT® brand, military clothing, detergents, paints and surgical items. In the services category, AbilityOne employees can be found working in areas such as landscaping, full facility maintenance, secure document destruction, fleet maintenance, food service, mail center operations, laundry services, order processing, administrative support, call centers, document imaging and a myriad of other services. In short, AbilityOne employees are meeting the needs of government agencies for products and services as diverse as the agencies themselves.

Sometimes I hear others in the disability community criticizing the AbilityOne Program, calling it “segregated employment.” What do you say to them?

Nearly 80 percent of AbilityOne program jobs are in “integrated settings” at federal agencies, on military bases and in our communities where people who are blind or have other severe disabilities work side by side with others who do not have disabilities. The Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act requires that at least 75 percent of the direct labor in a participating nonprofit agency be performed by people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

Thousands of people choose AbilityOne jobs and are paid either prevailing wages or at rates commensurate with their productivity. Jobs that are in what some might call “factory settings” are providing job opportunities that nonprofit agencies and the people they serve may not otherwise have. There are more than 600 qualified nonprofit agencies that provide AbilityOne job training and employment for people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities. There are hundreds more nonprofit agencies that look to the AbilityOne Program to support their local vocational mission but are not producing under the Program.

In the final analysis, many thousands of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities depend on the Program for their livelihood and ability to live with dignity in their communities. Choice is the ultimate objective for all individuals. People deserve choice in everything from where to spend their money to where they live to where they work.

Shouldn’t people with disabilities compete for jobs in private industry just like anybody else?

They can and they do. An important aspect of the AbilityOne Program is that it provides real job training for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. This job training provides greater opportunity for people to transfer the skills they have acquired into private

sector employment opportunities; however, competition for jobs grows every day and private industry is not effectively providing employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. If private industry had demonstrated its collective will to employ people with disabilities over the years, laws such as the Javits-Wagner-O’Day Act and the ADA would not have been necessary and we would not be continuing to experience a staggering unemployment rate for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

Can you cite some specific successes of the AbilityOne Program?

In California, more than 3,000 people are employed in nonprofit agencies participating in the AbilityOne Program. That figure alone would be attractive to any economic development official. Coupled with the fact that these employees earn in excess of \$34 million per year, you have a very real success story. In Texas, more than 4,000 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities work on AbilityOne contracts and earn nearly \$35 million annually. Even in a smaller state such as Maryland, nearly 3,000 people are working on AbilityOne projects earning nearly \$31 million a year. The real successes, however, are in the individual lives of the AbilityOne employees. Contact an AbilityOne qualified nonprofit agency in your community and go visit it. There you will find out firsthand how the AbilityOne Program and community nonprofit agencies are changing lives right in your own neighborhood.

Do agencies associated with the AbilityOne Program only service federal agencies and departments?

Not at all. In fact, community nonprofit agencies with AbilityOne contracts are encouraged to pursue contracts with state and local governments as well as commercial contracts in the private sector. Community nonprofit agencies contract with major corporations such as 3M, Boeing, General Motors, American Honda, Northern Telecom, Toro and Rockwell International, among others. For these and other private corpora-

tions, employees provide the full range of product and service offerings, including technical services such as micrographics, sub-assembly, recycling and data entry.

Remember, the mission of the AbilityOne Program is not to limit but rather to expand the training and employment choices for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

How do NIB and NISH assist nonprofits with the AbilityOne Program and the employment of persons with disabilities?

NIB and NISH are committed to helping their associated agencies succeed in providing employment opportunities to individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Among many other services, NIB and NISH offer their agencies assistance on product and service contract development and management, legislative and regulatory issues, communications and public relations, information technology, engineering and technical support, workforce development concerns and an extensive professional training program.

Focus on Your Public Policymakers





Focus on Your Public Policymakers

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Introduction

Establishing relationships with your public policymakers is crucial to the success of the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD). The AbilityOne Program was created by an act of federal law, and it can be improved by the same legislative process.

It is critical that our elected leaders are aware of how the AbilityOne Program benefits people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. If you aren’t certain who your federal policymakers are, go to www.congress.org and enter your zip code. If some of your AbilityOne employees or board members live or work in other congressional districts, you may want to contact these Members of Congress as well.

The following section provides ways to reach out to your congressional leaders. These are only guidelines and can also apply to local and state legislators. Don’t forget your governor, mayor, state representatives and city council members who can also make an impact on your organization.

Many of your congressional representatives will be in their local district offices during the week following the Columbus Day holiday on October 8, 2007. That week would be an opportune time to arrange a meeting, and we encourage you to contact your legislators and arrange a tour of your AbilityOne contract locations. But don’t limit yourself to just one week—use the whole month of October to educate your public policymakers about the AbilityOne Program.

After National Disability Employment Awareness Month, maintain the relationship with your legislators by providing him or her updates and information on your issues and accomplishments. Additionally, new contracts, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, anniversaries and other milestones, visits by prominent individuals, and awards presentations are all key events for conducting outreach to local, state and national leaders as well as local businesses and media organizations.

When you make contact or schedule a tour, be sure to inform the Government Affairs teams at NIB and NISH so we can follow up. Contacts are:

NISH—Nancyellen Gentile
703.584.3984
ngentile@nish.org

NIB—Christie Dawson
703.310.0324
cdawson@nib.org

Reaching Out to Your Legislators

If you would like to become more involved in the legislative process but don’t know how, experts say the best ways to influence Congress are:

- Eye contact
- Staff contact
- Telephone contact
- E-mail contact

Remember, “Congress” is an intangible concept, but your public policymaker is a real person with whom you can form the basis for mutual relations. The system doesn’t work well unless a partnership is built. You’ve got to begin your educational effort back in your own home state, in your congressional district, and build a one-to-one relationship there.

Public policymakers believe in public service and want to help, but they look to you as a constituent to tell them what you need. Experts recommend:

It’s up to everybody to tell the dilemma and personal side of their own story. It is best to humanize the data. Those constituents who are most helpful sit one-to-one across the table, form coalitions and personalize the problem. It’s best when public policymakers get to know constituents as people.

National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH can only be an effective legislative force with an active and attuned grassroots affiliate network. Don’t worry; if you’re not (yet) the best-connected constituent, keep working to develop closer relations with your legislators. This is something all NIB and NISH affiliates can and should do!

We are all proud of the AbilityOne Program, and you should let Congress know about the AbilityOne success stories in your community. Then, should a particular threat or opportunity arise that affects the AbilityOne Program, Congressional members will already know about and appreciate how beneficial the AbilityOne Program is and will be eager to do what they can to help.



How to Strengthen Ties with Congress

Build your relationship with your senators and representatives. Invite them to support you in several ways, such as:

- Tour your AbilityOne contract sites so they can observe, firsthand, people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities working on AbilityOne contracts.
- Attend a special ceremony celebrating a new contract award or building dedication at the contract site.
- Speak at an awards ceremony honoring employees or staff or both.
- Encourage employees and their families to exercise their right to vote.
- Arrange for all appropriate public policymakers to receive your newsletter, news releases, annual report and other mailings.
- Photograph policymakers when they attend your events and use them in your newsletters, news releases, annual report and other publications. It's a good idea to send extra copies of your publication, in which you include your policymaker's photo, to his/her district office.
- Attend your senators' and representatives' periodic "town meetings" in your home district.
- Arrange—at least—an annual meeting with your public policymakers and staff at their home district offices to update them on your activities.

Effective Communication with Lawmakers

Important Note: Communicate with members and senators in their Washington, D.C., offices via e-mail or facsimile. Letters sent via U.S. Postal Service can be delayed for weeks due to the increased security procedures. Be sure to include your mailing address in any letter sent via e-mail or fax so that your congressional representatives will know that you are a constituent and where they may respond to your communication.

- Keep your letter to one page and cover only one issue at a time.

- Note the specific name and number of the bill, law, resolution or program you are referencing in your letter or other communication.
- Explain the basis for your expertise and interest in the issue.
- Personal letters with personal anecdotes have much greater impact than form letters or postcards.
- Ask for specific action: to co-sponsor a bill, vote for or against specific legislation, introduce a bill, to write a letter, or some other action.
- Never threaten legislators ("I won't vote for you unless...").
- Use facts and case examples showing consequences for your lawmaker's district.
- Encourage your employees with disabilities and their families to write or meet with your lawmaker(s). Note: Each constituent contact is presumed to represent at least 20-30 other people who feel the same way but didn't write or phone. A mere 10-15 letters on an issue could sway an undecided lawmaker.
- Be polite but persistent with follow-up letters or phone calls to the legislator's staff to establish a persuasive dialogue, especially if your concerns were not addressed in a lawmaker's written response.

Check Your Network for Political Contacts

Your lawmakers make sure they know many people—that's how they win elections. Talk to people in your network to discover how many have ties to lawmakers. You'll be surprised to find there are quite a few...and they may be happy to approach your lawmaker with a concern that affects the good work your organization performs in your community.

Your contacts include:

- Friends and family
- Neighbors
- Co-workers
- People who are blind or have other severe disabilities and their family members



- Your Board of Directors, Business Advisory Committee, and Consumer, Family & Friends Advisory Committee (if you don't have a Business or Consumer Advisory Committee, contact the NIB or NISH Government Affairs teams for technical assistance with forming one)
- High school or college alumni
- Fellow members of your religious affiliations
- Business associates (Chamber of Commerce, professional associations)
- Business colleagues (vendors, customers, subcontractors, etc.)
- People you know from civic organizations and community organizations (PTA, Jaycees, League of Women Voters, Rotary, Lions, Elks, Masons, etc.)

Scheduling a Tour with a Member of Congress

Your member of Congress will most likely be in his or her home district—especially during an election year—during the Columbus Day congressional recess. Consider scheduling a tour for them at your facility or at the location of your AbilityOne service project in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Your Initial Visit

A personal visit to the congressional district office in your area is an effective way to engage your member. Generally, a staff member in the district office is responsible for planning the member's schedule while he or she is home from Congress. Members are in the home district for a week near federal holidays such as Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Columbus Day. In addition, they are in their home districts during the entire month of August and on most Mondays and Fridays. These "district work periods" allow them to meet with constituents, and you may be able to personally meet with the member.

If a meeting with the member of Congress is not possible, it is still worth the effort for you to meet with a key staff member in the district office. A Congress member's time is often scheduled far in advance, so make an initial appointment in the district office and ask for

several possible dates for the tour. Even if the member is not available for a tour during October, try to schedule a tour for a future date.

The Invitation

Follow your visit to the district office with a formal letter of invitation including date, time and place. Make sure the logistics (i.e. directions, time) are clear and concise. Congressional staff usually brief members prior to an event, so provide this information to them in advance.

Prepare a profile of your agency.

- Include economic and community-impact information, such as number of employees, unique services you provide to your employees, total sales, and total wages paid to people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.
- Describe the AbilityOne manufacturing or services facility, its operation, the number of employees and other important background information.

The information in the above paragraph is also excellent to include in a Media Kit or Information Packet.

When you have a confirmed date and time, make sure you send this information to your local media at least a week in advance. A Sample Media Alert is available at www.nish.org.

It is best to invite only one elected official at the same time (i.e. if a member of Congress is scheduled for a tour, do not invite the governor to attend at the same time). If possible, invite him or her to present a certificate or award to your Employee of the Year, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new site or renovation, or something special that will better justify the tour. Another possibility is to present a product, award or other token of appreciation to the member.

Indicate the amount of time you would like for the tour. Keep in mind that other constituents also want to meet with this legislator, so do your best to keep the tour less than an hour. After the letter has been sent, follow up with a phone call to the scheduler for an answer. Most members review invitations with their schedulers on a weekly basis to determine which invitations to accept. Your polite persistence will also indicate an enthusiasm on your part for the tour.



Getting Ready for the Tour

Set aside an hour for the tour. Inform your employees of the date and time, particularly if a presentation of some type is planned. Once you receive confirmation that a tour is on the schedule, contact the local media and invite them to attend. Arrange for a professional photographer to be on hand. All elected officials like to have photos of meeting with constituents, and the photos can be sent to the media as well as framed and sent to the member's office with a follow-up thank you letter.

Discuss notifying the press with the member's staff. They may wish to issue a news release indicating the time and place of the tour. If not, you can still send a short news advisory to the City Desk editor for newspapers and assignment editors for local TV or radio stations.

Note: Even if there is no initial media interest, you can still send photos and news releases to them after the tour along with a story about your agency. The media may use the information at a later time or follow up with you to pursue another story idea. (See "Getting in the News" for more information.)

Conducting the Tour

Try to make your agency tour stand out with special touches such as a banner, poster or other signs of welcome.

- Make your explanation of what takes place in your agency simple and concise.
- Brag, as long as it's true.
- Emphasize positive items of interest, such as an innovative safety program, low error rate, special services to employees, end users of your products or other items that will make your agency stand out.
- Remember to introduce and involve your staff and employees with the tour.
- Have an employee demonstrate his or her job and explain the procedure to the member. These make great photos!
- Involve employees as much as possible and remember that their personal story is the most powerful tool you have.

Do not use the tour as a heavy lobbying opportunity. Treat the member of congress as an honored visitor.

Just seeing the day-to-day operations and meeting your employees will ensure that the member will have a new appreciation and understanding of the AbilityOne Program. Anticipate any questions the member may have about your facility and be prepared to answer those questions or know who might have that answer.

After the tour, have the member speak at a membership or employee meeting, present an award to your Employee of the Year, or present a token of appreciation to the member. At a minimum, thank the member for visiting and offer to serve as a local advisor on issues that affect people who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

Follow-Up

Send a brief thank-you letter along with any photos and media clippings you may have.

If there was no media coverage, send the editor of your newspaper a brief write-up and a photo of your member of Congress touring your facility. If you have an in-house newsletter, send a copy of the article covering the tour to your member of Congress. Remember to inform the NIB or NISH Government Affairs staff of the tour so they can follow up.



Sample Agency Tour Thank You Note

(Printed on your agency letterhead)

(Date)

(Name of Representative)

(Address of Representative)

(City, State and Zip Code)

Dear (Name of Representative):

On behalf of the employees and staff of the (Insert name of agency), I want to thank you for making time in your busy schedule to visit us on (Date of visit). Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to meet you, and we appreciate your commitment to your constituents who are blind or have other severe disabilities.

As you saw firsthand, the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), is a win-win for everyone involved. It provides job training and employment opportunities to people who are blind or have other severe disabilities while providing quality, on-time goods and services to the federal government at a competitive price.

I know that time in your home district is extremely limited. We appreciate that you visited (Name of your agency) so you could see for yourself who we are, what we do and how employment of people who are blind or have severe disabilities impacts our entire community.

Enclosed are some photos we took during your visit with us as well as some media clippings. We will also send you the article that will be published in our organization's next newsletter.

If I can be of assistance, in particular when the Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act or other issues affecting people who are blind or have other severe disabilities are before you in Congress, please don't hesitate to contact me any time.

Sincerely,

(Name/Signature Block)

Economic Impact of the AbilityOne Program





Economic Impact of the AbilityOne Program

Introduction

Providing employment opportunities to nearly 48,000 people, the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. More than 600 nonprofit organizations employ these individuals while delivering a wide array of quality products and services to the federal government.

The Program is a cost-effective way to help people who are blind or have other severe disabilities achieve greater independence. Through Program employment, participants:

- Reduce dependence on government support
- Join the ranks of taxpayers

The following research summary demonstrates how employment in AbilityOne commissary services, food service programs and Public Building Service (PBS) custodial projects affects peoples' use of government entitlements. Three areas of the AbilityOne Program were studied. The studies were conducted by Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc. on behalf of NISH.

Total savings from the custodial, food service and commissary areas of the AbilityOne Program	\$46.75 million
Entitlement reduction	\$22.15 million
Increased income and payroll taxes . . .	\$24.60 million
Annual savings per AbilityOne Program employee (3 Program parts/10,119 employees)	\$4,620

Custodial

Employing individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities in AbilityOne PBS custodial programs saves federal and state governments an estimated \$15.7 million through the reduction of entitlements paid to these individuals. In addition, employment increases the payments AbilityOne employees make to the government through income and payroll taxes, totaling \$15.8 million. Thus, by employing 5,176 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, these AbilityOne custodial contracts have a net impact on government balance sheets of \$31.5 million. This is an annual savings of \$6,084 per employee.

The reduction (savings to the government) in government expenditures for entitlements found for custodial employees is due to the discontinuation of entitlements for some employees and a reduction in the amount of benefits received by others.

After joining the AbilityOne Custodial Program, the following entitlement dependencies were reduced:

- 97% of the Program participants reduced or discontinue welfare benefits,
- 92% either reduced or discontinued their food stamp benefit,
- 77% reduced or discontinued their Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI),
- 76% reduced or discontinued their public housing benefit,
- 69% eliminated the amount of their Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and,
- Reliance on Medicaid and Medicare also dropped significantly.



Food Service

Employing individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities in AbilityOne food service programs saves federal and state governments an estimated \$3.7 million through the reduction of entitlements paid to these individuals. AbilityOne Program employees also increase their payments to the government through income and payroll taxes, which amount to an estimated \$4.9 million. In all, by employing 2,809 individuals with disabilities, these AbilityOne food service contracts have a net impact on government balance sheets of \$8.6 million. This is an annual savings of \$3,053 per employee.

Similar to what was found for commissary employees, the reduction in government expenditures for entitlements found for food service employees is due to the discontinuation of entitlements for some people and a reduction in the amount of benefits received by others.

After joining the AbilityOne Food Service Program, the following entitlement dependencies were reduced.

- 96% of Program participants reduced or discontinued food stamps,
- 92% either reduced or discontinued their welfare benefit,
- 78% reduced or discontinued their SSI benefit
- 57% either receive less or have stopped receiving SSDI benefits, and,
- Reliance on public housing, Medicaid and Medicare also dropped significantly.

Commissary

Employing individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities in AbilityOne commissary programs saves federal and state governments an estimated \$2.75 million through the reduction of entitlements paid to these individuals. AbilityOne Program employees also increase their payments to the government through income and payroll taxes, which amount to an estimated \$3.9 million. In all, by employing 2,134 people who are blind or have other severe disabilities, these AbilityOne commissary contracts have a net impact on government balance sheets of \$6.65 million. This is an annual savings of \$3,138 per employee. The reduction in government expenditures for entitlements found is due to the discontinuation of entitlements for some employees and a reduction in the amount of benefits received by others.

After joining the AbilityOne Food Service Program, the following entitlement dependencies were reduced.

- 92% eliminated their dependence on welfare
- 88% no longer participated in the food stamp program
- 74% discontinued or reduced SSI benefits (17% reduced benefits; 57% eliminated benefits)
- SSDI was likewise reduced or discontinued by a majority of the employees.
- Reliance on public housing, Medicaid and Medicare also dropped significantly.

Study Subject	Number of Employees	Savings	Contributions	Total	Savings per Employee
Custodial	5,176	\$15.7 million	\$15.8 million	\$31.5 million	\$6,084
Food service	2,809	\$3.7 million	\$4.9 million	\$8.6 million	\$3,053
Commissary	2,134	\$2.75 million	\$3.9 million	\$6.65 million	\$3,138





AbilityOne Program Partners

What is the AbilityOne Program, formerly Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD)?

Providing employment opportunities to nearly 48,000 people, the AbilityOne Program is the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in the United States. More than 600 participating, community-based nonprofit agencies (NPAs) train and employ these individuals nationwide and provide a wide array of quality on-time goods and services to the federal government at a fair price.

The AbilityOne Program harnesses the purchasing power of the federal government to buy products and services from participating state and private NPAs dedicated to training and employing individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities, and to increasing the 38 percent employment rate faced by people with disabilities. The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act, under which the AbilityOne Program resides, began as the Wagner-O'Day Act in 1938 and permitted agencies serving people who are blind to sell products like brooms and mops to the government. The act was expanded in 1971 when Sen. Jacob Javits led an effort to permit other people with severe disabilities to participate in the Program. The Javits Amendment also expanded the Act to include the provision of services to the federal government.

The AbilityOne Program is a coordinated effort on behalf of the federal agency, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (the Committee), National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities. This effort has allowed people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to acquire job skills and training, receive wages and benefits, and gain greater independence and quality of life. Through the AbilityOne Program, people who are blind or have other severe disabilities have the opportunity to more fully participate in their communities and can market their AbilityOne skills into other public and private sector jobs.

History of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program

Enacted by Congress and signed into law by President Roosevelt in 1938, the Wagner-O'Day Act mandated that the federal government purchase brooms, mops and other suitable commodities furnished by community programs employing people who are blind. The new legislation used the purchasing power of the government as a catalyst for sustaining and expanding employment opportunities. The law also required that at least 75 percent of a participating organization's direct labor employees be people who are blind.

The Wagner-O'Day Act also established a committee appointed by the President of the United States—the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (formerly known as the Committee on Purchases of Blind-Made Products)—to oversee the Program and authorize a central nonprofit agency to facilitate the distribution of orders and perform other related functions. A group of representatives from 20 agencies in 11 states began meeting at the American Foundation for the Blind soon after the law was passed. As a result of these meetings, NIB was created and subsequently authorized as the Program's first central nonprofit agency (CNA) by the Committee.

In 1971, Sen. Jacob Javits and a coalition of agencies serving people with a range of severe disabilities spearheaded efforts to expand the Wagner-O'Day Act. The agencies included Goodwill Industries International, the National Easter Seal Society, the American Rehabilitation Association, The ARC, the United Cerebral Palsy Association and the International Association of Jewish Vocational Services. These six groups soon formed a new organization—NISH (formerly known as National Industries for the Severely Handicapped)—whose purpose was to support the expanded JWOD Program. The expanded Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act (41 U.S.C. 46-48c) permitted nonprofit agencies (NPAs) serving people with other severe disabilities to participate in the Program and authorized NPAs to provide not only supplies but also services to the federal government.



In 2006, the Committee voted to change the name of the program from Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) to AbilityOne. This name change allowed the Committee to harness the abilities of thousands of people who have disabilities and reflect all the people who make the program possible.

Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled

The AbilityOne Program is administered by an independent federal agency—the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (the Committee). There are 15 Committee members, including 11 senior federal executives, a majority of whom are procurement officials, and four private citizens who are advocates for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. The federal executives on the Committee represent the following agencies:

- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of the Air Force
- Department of the Army
- Department of Commerce (DoC)
- Department of Defense (DoD)
- Department of Education (ED)
- Department of Labor (DoL)
- Department of the Navy
- Department of Justice (DoJ)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- General Services Administration (GSA)

The four private citizens on the Committee include two individuals who represent participating NPAs and two individuals who are knowledgeable about the employment obstacles faced by people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. The President of the United States appoints all members of the Committee.

In addition to their role in setting policy for the AbilityOne Program, Committee members also:

- Determine which products and services purchased by the federal government will be added to the Program Procurement List for provision from AbilityOne-participating NPAs.

- Establish the fair market prices for these products and services and revise the prices when appropriate.
- Ensure that NPAs comply with Committee rules and regulations (through on-site reviews of agency operations, annual certifications and other means).
- Assist entities of the federal government in expanding their AbilityOne procurement.

National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities—propose items to the Committee for addition to the Procurement List after working closely with federal contracting activities and the NPAs that will perform the work. The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act requires that the federal government purchase products and services that the Committee has decided, after careful consideration, to add to the Procurement List. The Committee works closely with NISH, NIB, AbilityOne-participating NPAs and federal personnel in order to accomplish the employment and procurement missions of the AbilityOne Program.

The Committee is supported in its efforts by a full-time staff located in Arlington, Va. The staff:

- Reviews proposed products and services and compiles information to ensure that the Committee has adequate data to determine whether the products or services are suitable for addition to the Procurement List.
- Communicates to federal customers the benefits of purchasing AbilityOne Program products and services.
- Identifies and researches issues of interest to the AbilityOne Program for review and discussion by the Committee.
- Reviews and analyzes recommended fair market prices for current and proposed AbilityOne Program products and services.
- Assists NPAs in complying with Committee rules and regulations and those of other federal agencies.
- Implements technology infrastructures to facilitate communication and rapid access to information electronically among Committee members, Committee staff, central NPAs, NPAs and federal customers.



National Industries for the Blind (NIB)

Incorporated as a private, nonprofit organization in 1938, National Industries for the Blind (NIB) is the first of two central nonprofit organizations designated by the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled to facilitate the AbilityOne Program. NIB has been making a difference in the lives of thousands of people who are blind for 70 years.

NIB has more than 88 associated agencies throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, generating employment and training opportunities for more than 5,600 people who are blind. NIB believes in the capabilities of people who are blind. This means providing jobs with competitive wages, benefits, great work environments, upward mobility, and career planning and placement. Employment is the single most important factor that enables an individual to more fully participate in society, bringing economic stability, independence and dignity.

NIB's associated agencies offer careers at all skill levels, from manufacturing and warehousing to administrative support, call center operations and management positions. NIB also provides on-the-job training and sponsors the Business Leaders Program, designed specifically to prepare individuals who are blind for careers in business management.

NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities

NISH is the second of two central nonprofit organizations designated by the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled to facilitate the AbilityOne Program. NISH's objective is to create employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities by securing federal contracts for its network of community-based, nonprofit agencies.

More than 550 NISH-affiliated agencies provide a wide array of quality products and services to the federal government while employing more than 41,000 people with severe disabilities. People with disabilities are working on projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

With its headquarters in Vienna, Virginia, NISH has regional offices in California, Georgia, Illinois, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. Among its services, NISH offers its agencies regulatory assistance, information technology support, engineering, financial and technical assistance, legislative and workforce development assistance, communications and public relations materials and an extensive professional training program.

**NISH—Providing Employment Opportunities
for People with Severe Disabilities**

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