



# AbilityOne PROGRAM OVERVIEW

From Awareness  
To Job Opportunity.



## Overview

### ***The Chance to Work Can Change a Life.***

At the AbilityOne Program, we know first-hand that the chance to work can change a life. Every day, we see Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities prove to themselves and others that they are able to fulfill their potential and work toward independence. **The AbilityOne Program** provides employment opportunities to tens of thousands of Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities. More than 600 participating, community-based nonprofit agencies (NPA's) train and employ these individuals with disabilities nationwide.

But there are hundreds of thousands of Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities that are still waiting for their chance to work. That's why building awareness of the Program is so crucial to its success. That's why we're asking our partners in opportunity to help us raise awareness through their public relations, public policy and marketing efforts. Join us in building awareness, so we can help build more fulfilling lives.

### ***Purchasing Power, Empowering People***

The largest single source of jobs for individuals with disabilities in the United States, the **AbilityOne Program** delivers quality products and services to the federal government at a fair price. The Program uses the purchasing power of the federal government to buy products and services from community-based nonprofit agencies nationwide.

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**The AbilityOne Program is the Largest Single Source  
of Jobs for People Who Are Blind or Have  
Other Severe Disabilities in the United States.**

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**FROM AWARENESS  
TO OPPORTUNITY:**

**Quality  
Products and  
Services**



**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 and services, including:**

- Office supplies under the SKILCRAFT® brand
- Military clothing
- Detergents
- Paints
- Surgical items
- Landscaping
- Full facility maintenance
- Secure document destruction
- Fleet maintenance
- Supply chain management
- Food service
- Mail center operations
- Laundry services
- Order processing
- Administrative support
- Call centers
- Document imaging
- ...and more

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**Federal and state governments are saving more than  
\$46 million a year through the AbilityOne Program.**

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**The AbilityOne Program** provides a cost-effective way to help people who are blind or have other severe disabilities to achieve greater independence, financially and emotionally.

**FROM AWARENESS  
TO OPPORTUNITY:**  
Achieving  
Independence



**Our workers can:**

- Become indispensable employees
- Reduce their dependence on government support and become taxpaying citizens
- Enjoy fuller participation in their communities
- Transfer their new skills into other public and private sector jobs
- Gain self-esteem and confidence
- Improve their overall quality of life

**The AbilityOne Program** also benefits local communities, the federal government and the American taxpaying public:

**FROM AWARENESS  
TO OPPORTUNITY:**  
Benefits



- Thousands of people who might otherwise be solely dependent upon public assistance become taxpaying citizens
- The federal government enjoys great value by receiving quality products and services at fair prices
- Federal and state governments are saving tens of millions a year through the AbilityOne Program.

Freedom of choice and self-reliance are important objectives for all individuals. Independence gives birth to confidence; it raises self-esteem. The thousands of people who are blind or have other severe disabilities depend on the **AbilityOne Program** not only for their livelihood—but for their dignity. Please join us in promoting awareness of this important program—and help to fulfill the potential of thousands of your fellow citizens—by not only providing hope for a better future, but by providing the means to make it happen.

*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.*

## Time for Action. A Brief History of AbilityOne

**The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act**, under which the AbilityOne Program resides, is enacted by Congress and signed into law by President Roosevelt. This act permits agencies serving people who are blind to sell products like brooms and mops to the government. This legislation uses the purchasing power of the government as a catalyst for sustaining and expanding employment opportunities. The law also requires that at least 75 percent of a participating organization's direct labor employees be people who are blind.

**National Industries for the Blind (NIB)** is incorporated as a private, nonprofit organization. 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.

**The Wagner-O'Day Act** establishes 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. It authorizes 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 begins 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.

1938

**The Javits-Wagner-O'Day Act** is expanded when Senator Jacob Javits leads 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.

**Senator Jacob Javits** and a coalition of agencies serving people with a range of severe disabilities spearhead 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 form a new organization—NISH (formerly known as National Industries for the Severely Handicapped)—whose purpose is to support the expanded JWOD Program. The expanded Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act (41 U.S.C. 46-48c) permits nonprofit agencies (NPAs) serving people with other severe disabilities to participate in the Program and authorizes NPAs to provide not only supplies, but also services to the federal government.

1971

1974

**NISH—Creating Employment Opportunities for People with Severe Disabilities** is established. 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.

2001

**JWOD Procurement Champions Program** is established to recognize federal government employees who provide outstanding support of JWOD.

**The JWOD Program** commences surge support during Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Post Major Combat Phase.

2002

**JWOD Congressional Champions Program** established to recognize senators and representatives who demonstrate outstanding support of their constituents with disabilities and the JWOD Program.

2006

**The AbilityOne Program** is administered by an independent federal agency—the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (the Committee) and supported by NIB and NISH. 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 Committee votes** to change the name of the Program from Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) to AbilityOne. This name change allows the Committee to harness the abilities of thousands of people who have disabilities and reflects all the people who make the Program possible.

Today