



## **Outreach in the Red**

### *Keeping a commitment to awareness in difficult budget times*

States across the country face budget shortfalls. Children's programs are especially prone to cuts. Administrators must make difficult decisions when trimming budgets, and often, expenses for public awareness, marketing and advocacy fall by the wayside in an effort to protect direct services.

In times like these, it may seem that these cuts make sense – that public awareness expenses are a luxury that cannot be afforded.

However, if you completely shut off communication, you may create an information vacuum that pulls you away from those you serve and those who support you. Caregivers who need information may not be able to find it. Parents who need services won't know where to turn. Community leaders and legislators may lose focus on your issues if they aren't kept informed.

But you can communicate efficiently and effectively by re-evaluating your resources and carefully targeting communication to your primary audiences. Here are some ideas:

If you look carefully and think creatively, you may find solutions to your public awareness budget problems close at hand.

- Look for professionally prepared public awareness templates that you can adapt to fit your message at little or no cost.
- Use your website to post pdf copies of lengthy reports, saving on the cost of printing.
- Train in-house staff in communications, graphic design and web design skills to save costs on outsourcing these functions.
- Review old public awareness materials and determine if they can be recycled.