

## **Budget Advocacy: When and How to do What**

The first step in the budget process happened on December 16th with the release of the Executive Budget. This document represents what the Governor believes is the best strategy for achieving his policy goals by directing government spending in certain areas and prescribing revenues. The Governor is able to amend his budget submission after 21 days to change elements where he has been persuaded or to make technical changes. Because of the current fiscal crisis, the Governor released his budget a full month early which means that advocates will need to stay alert and flexible as the process may be changed from the usual schedule.

The Governor will give his State of the State address on January 7th and the Legislature convenes for the 2009 session on January 8th. Shortly after that it is expected that the Senate and the Assembly will convene joint hearings on the Governor's budget proposal. At these hearings members of the public can testify about the impact of the proposal on services or provide additional suggestions. Complicating the process this year is the uncertainty of which political party will control the Senate on January 8th. While the Democrats hold a slim majority of seats following the November election, at this time a few members have not committed to voting for the Democratic majority leader.

Once the joint budget hearings are complete, each house usually produces a budget that reflects their priorities and then negotiations begin to develop a final budget that can be passed by both houses and sent to the Governor for his signature. The budget deadline is April 1st, but the Governor has asked the Legislature to pass this year's budget by March 1st to reduce the deficit.

To become familiar with what is in the Governor's budget, you can visit the website of the Division of the Budget – [www.budget.state.ny.us](http://www.budget.state.ny.us). There you will find an extensive section containing all the documents for the 2009-2010 budget proposal. You can also continue to check the SCAA website, [www.scaany.org](http://www.scaany.org), for budget details. We will post new documents as we process the various parts of the budget. Also check with statewide organizations which represent your profession interests or community. You can see a list of New York Children's Action Network partners [here](#). There you will find links to many children's advocacy organizations.

You can act now by contacting Governor Paterson about his budget. There is still time to get letters in before the 21-day amendments are due. You can write to explain how some of the changes in the proposed budget will impact your program and the services you provide to families and children. You can write to:

Honorable David A. Paterson  
Governor  
Executive Chamber  
The Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

You can continue to follow the budget process through the SCAA website and future editions of this newsletter.