Checklist for Advocates

Which way does this story (press release, op-ed, letter to the editor) lean? Is it primarily EPISODIC or THEMATIC?

How wide is the lens? Does the story open with an individual portrait of a victim of tragedy or a description of a single event? Does it focus on an individual recipient of services, or even on an unsung hero? EPISODIC

Or does it begin with context—historical or otherwise? Does it focus on a trend, discuss community programs, policies, funding, or other interventions? THEMATIC

Does it attribute the source of the problem to an individual, using an exemplar—a person or particular group—to make the point? EPISODIC

Or is the focus on the situation or system that affects large numbers of people? THEMATIC

Is the solution to fix a person? EPISODIC

Or is it primarily about changing a situation or set of conditions? THEMATIC

Is the article focused on the heroism of a single individual? EPISODIC

Or is it about how people came together—or should come together—to solve a problem that is greater than the sum of the individuals experiencing it? THEMATIC

Does it appeal to readers as consumers of information? EPISODIC

Or does it appeal to readers as engaged citizens? THEMATIC

Is it about individuals getting more information? EPISODIC

Or is it about collective action through policies, regulations, and letter-writing campaigns? THEMATIC

Are the subjects disempowered and beleaguered? EPISODIC

Or are they empowered and enfranchised? THEMATIC

Does the article inspire primarily feelings of sympathy for a specific individual or group? EPISODIC

Or does it motivate the reader to act and to help fix a larger set of conditions? THEMATIC