Lead Speaker Responsibilities

BEFORE THE PANEL:

1. Coordinate the check-in meeting with all panelists at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the presentation. Be sure to discuss:
   
   o In what order will we speak?
   
   o How will we keep each other aware of the time? You could pass a watch or have one person serve as the timekeeper and signal the other speakers when they have one minute left. (If you choose the latter option, be sure to make regular eye contact with the timekeeper and have someone else watch the time when the timekeeper is speaking.)
   
   o If the requester asked the panel to address a specific topic, how can we relate our stories to it?
   
   o Are there any topics that panelists are more or less comfortable discussing?

2. Introduce yourself to the panel requester.
   
   o Review the format with the requester.
   
   o Confirm the ending time of the presentation.
   
   o Give the requester the handouts and the requester and audience evaluation forms and tell hir/her/him that you will need to leave time for the audience to fill out the evaluation form.

BEGIN THE PANEL:

1. Introduce yourself and the other panelists.

2. Tell them that you are from the UMass Stonewall Center and explain where we are on campus, give our web address, and describe the resources that the center provides (programming, book and dvd library, Queer-e, transgender resource guide, ally trainings, etc.).

3. Go over the format (each person will speak for a few minutes, followed by a Q & A). Announce how you will do the questions, either asking them to write down their questions on scrap paper, which will be collected and read, or calling on people after the panelists speak.

4. Explain the following ground rules, as needed:

   ▼ Confidentiality is important. Let the audience know that personal information shared during the Speakers Bureau is confidential and should not leave the room. Explain that some of the LGBTQ speakers may not be “out” to everyone, so that it is important that audience members not identify the panelists in public, such as by calling out, “Hey, didn’t I see you at that gay speakers panel?,” if they should see one of the speakers elsewhere on campus. Indicate that the confidentiality policy also applies to what audience members disclose during the presentation.
We are not there to engage in a debate, but to share our experiences. Let the audience know that the main goals of the Speakers Bureau are to share the panelists’ personal experiences and to present factual information.

We speak only for ourselves. The panelists represent only themselves, not all LGBTQ people and allies. Emphasize the diversity of LGBTQIA identities and note that the panelists’ experiences constitute only a small segment of LGBTQ experiences. If you have the opportunity, explain that the assumption that all queer people are alike is a form of stereotyping commonly practiced against oppressed groups. Also point out that audience members should speak only for themselves, too.

There are no stupid questions. Approach your audience with an awareness that for some people, the panel will be their first exposure to a group of “out” LGBTQ people. They may ask questions that you find naïve or even offensive. But it is better to have these questions expressed, so that we can address the stereotypes and misinformation behind them. Explain to the audience that if we did not feel comfortable answering questions, we would not be there. You also might suggest to the audience that the panel is an opportunity for them to ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking someone they know who is LGBTQ.

We reserve the right not to answer particular questions. Explain that some panelists may not want to discuss certain aspects of their personal lives, such as their sexual behavior or relationships. We also might not have an answer to any given question, for many different reasons. Note that the panelists can take care of themselves by deciding when to answer and what to share, and that the audience does not need to worry about censoring their questions. So as not to discourage questions, also state that such instances rarely occur and that we encourage all questions, as another speaker is often willing to answer instead.

Seek approval of the ground rules from the audience. Ask if these ground rules are OK and if they would like to add any new ones.

5. After each panelist speaks for 4-5 minutes, address any terminology that has not already been covered. Be sure to:
   - Define the acronym “LGBTQ” and the word “transgender” (audience members probably know “lesbian,” “gay,” and “bisexual.”
   - Explain why “homosexual” is not an appropriate word to be using.
   - Explain that the use of “queer” depends on the context of where it is said and by whom.

5. Facilitate the question and answer period.
   - If no one is asking questions, ask a question yourself to one of the panelists. If this does not help break the ice, ask the audience members to write down a question. Collect the sheets and read out the questions, having the panelists address them.

6. Close the panel.
   - End five minutes earlier than the time allotted for the audience to fill out the evaluation. Thank everyone for their participation and thank the requester for asking us to come.

THANK YOU!!!