

I Am Shared Safety **Rayna Gray, MSW** **Domestic Violence** **Intervention Director** **Department of Human** **Services**

Rayna Gray feels “blessed and honored” to be part of Philadelphia’s [Department of Human Services](#) (DHS). As the Domestic Violence (DV) Intervention Director, Rayna explains, “Our work is respected and sought out. By putting our department – the DV Intervention Unit – and the [Office of Domestic Violence Strategies](#) into place, the City and DHS have recognized the impact of helping people struggling with DV. DHS recognizes that there is a correlation between child abuse and DV; and they’ve taken a stance: DV, no more.”



A Philadelphia native, Rayna earned an undergraduate degree in social work from Eastern University and a Master’s in social work from West Chester University. Before joining DHS in 2019, Rayna worked at [Lutheran Settlement House](#), People’s Emergency Center, and Bucks County Housing Group. Her experience as a social worker offers her a unique perspective on the work she does at DHS; “when I was on the non-profit side, we talked about things that I actually see coming to fruition on the city side.” Stephanie Levin, co-chair of Shared Safety’s communications sub-committee, spoke with Rayna about the services the DV unit provides, how Rayna’s work and the systems around it have changed, and how Shared Safety impacts the work she does.

SL: What is the role of the DHS DV unit?

RG: We support social workers when it comes to DV-related cases; we offer guidance to best address families with DV issues. We try to empower case managers to serve survivors, their children, and perpetrators, connecting them to resources and helping with safety planning. We provide trainings for DHS staff and [Community Umbrella Agencies](#) (CUAs).

SL: How has your work changed since you started at DHS?

RG: Our team has grown so we are able to attend case review meetings for all 10 CUAs across the city. We’re able to train more staff, and now we can provide quarterly trainings.

SL: What kinds of training does the DV unit provide?

RG: We provide DV 101 for all new staff that covers what DV is; how it impacts children; red flags; why survivors stay in abusive relationships; and how we can support and provide resources to families. For the CUAs, we gear training toward their specific needs; we ask what they’re looking for. Sometimes, a CUA will ask for a training on DV and how it relates to mental health, or DV and drug and alcohol abuse.

SL: What keeps you doing this kind of work?

RG: It's my passion and purpose. Most social workers get into the work because of their past history of trauma. That's one of the reasons I got into social work. I am inspired by giving back and serving survivors – their resiliency and strength to overcome the abuse they've endured. It's so rewarding.

SL: How do you see the system's response to DV changing?

RG: It takes a long time to change systems, especially the larger ones, but any change is a step in the right direction. Each consult, each training, our advocacy work; each one changes the system, little by little. Things on a smaller scale become larger; it just takes time.

SL: How does involvement in Shared Safety impact your work?

RG: It helps with knowing what's going on around the city, what other organizations and agencies are doing. Especially as far as what resources are available for survivors, perpetrators, and children. I'm able to bring that information back to our staff and investigators.

SL: How do you do self-care?

RG: That's a good question; I always talk about safe-care in my trainings. Self-care is very important.

I ride my bike – her name is Naomi. Every weekend I put my AirPods in – and listen to gospel or rap music or whatever my spirit is telling me to listen to – and ride the loop of Kelly and West River Drives.

This I Am Shared Safety feature was shared in the October 2022 Shared Safety Newsletter.

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