

I am Shared Safety

Devin Weekley

Teen Dating Violence Specialist

Lutheran Settlement House

Devin Weekley believes that “young people are smarter than we think.” As [Lutheran Settlement House’s](#) (LSH’s) teen counselor and advocate, she knows how capable they are. “Teens can do amazing things when they are empowered to do so—and given the support they need. We need to show them that we are counting on them” to be tomorrow’s leaders.

Devin attended Cheyney University of Pennsylvania for communications and media. Before joining Lutheran Settlement House in 2021, she worked as a case aide at Turning Points for Children, and as a health educator at Plain Talk Philadelphia, a sexual health intervention project of Public Health Management Corporation.

Stephanie Levin, who co-chairs Shared Safety’s communications sub-committee, spoke with Devin about how LSH empowers young people, what she enjoys about working with teens, and how she hopes Shared Safety will help her in her work at LSH.



SL: What do you do as a Teen Dating Violence Specialist?

DW: I lead a preventive program (called [STAR, Students Talking About Relationships](#)) in schools—currently Science Leadership Academy at Beeber and G.W. Carver High School of Engineering and Science—in Philadelphia. We teach young people how to navigate a healthy relationship, how to recognize an unhealthy relationship, and how to advocate for themselves. LSH also runs a six-week summer leadership development program that prepares young people to take their skills and knowledge into their communities. From this program, we select teens to become ambassadors in their own schools.

I also lead a similar but shorter workshop at The Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center, as well as workshops for pregnant and parenting teens through the School District of Philadelphia’s ELECT (Education Leading to Employment and Career Training) program.

SL: What do you like most about working with teens?

DW: I really enjoy listening to their concerns and hearing what matters to them, especially because many adults find it hard to relate, and get through, to them. Young adults are going through so much in their communities and schools, and I enjoy being a trusted adult they can confide in, or just let their hair down and relax around.

SL: What are some things about teen dating that would surprise people?

DW: It shouldn't be surprising, but it is: Teens experience the same things in relationships that adults do. Even though they're young, their feelings and experiences are valid. They deserve to be taught skills to help them navigate healthy relationships, whether they use those skills now or in the future.

SL: Any tips for talking to teens about healthy relationships?

DW: Use discretion; don't put them on the spot. It can be hard for them to open up. But, if they do, get ready to be uncomfortable—that comes with it. The more they share with you shows how much they trust you.

If you suspect a teen is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship; don't push too hard or they will rebel. It will be hard, but allow them to make the decision that's best for them. Be there for them; they're gonna need unconditional guidance and support that they may not be able to get from a parent (who may be protective and try to tell them what they *should* do).

SL: What do you hope to achieve from being part of Shared Safety?

DW: I would like to build a network of other agencies that offer resources, specifically for teens and young adults surrounding dating violence, so we can better support the youth in the city.

SL: What do you enjoy doing when you're not at work?

DW: Spending time with my family. I'm really a homebody, especially in the winter—I enjoy being on the couch with some snacks, watching a movie. When it's warm, though, I love to be outside with my friends and my family.

This I Am Shared Safety feature was shared in the January/February 2023 Shared Safety Newsletter.

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