



# PREVENT. RESIST. SUPPORT.

## Episode 3: Report with REES

with Mary Lobson



University  
of Windsor

Office of Sexual Violence Prevention,  
Resistance, and Support

### **Prevent Resist Support Podcast**

#### **Season 2 Episode 3: Report with REES with Mary Lobson**

Mary Lobson: This time should be a time of yeah coming to school and in you know just just being part of you know that amazing community and I remember what I went to university all the all the opportunities and the promise that that we go to post secondary with

Transition music: I've got your back my dear and I know that you've got mine. I feel that hope and fear but I know we'll hold the line. So keep your head up. Keep your hand out when your breath is feeling short. Prevent resist support.

Anne Rudzinski: Hi everyone and welcome to Prevent Resist Support. This is a podcast by the Office of Sexual Violence at the University of Windsor. Today we're going to be talking to Mary Lobson from REES. REES is our new online reporting tool and you can access it at [reescommunity.com](https://reescommunity.com). So R E E S community.com If you're interested in reporting at our university. So REES is just one of the way that students, staff, and faculty can form a report at the University of Windsor. So one option is you can reach out to our office, we will explain your options, what the reporting process involves and give you the information that you need to make a decision about what's right for you. So you can reach out to us at [svsupport@uwindsor.ca](mailto:svsupport@uwindsor.ca), if you'd like to chat, but we also now have the REES reporting tool. So if you would like to file a report online, you can do that through REES. So we're going to chat a little bit about how that platform was created, what it looks like to report through REES, and we'll answer some questions about confidentiality. So we're really

excited to have Mary today with us to chat about REES. And again, just a reminder, if you need support around this topic, you can reach out to us at [svsupport@uwindSOR.ca](mailto:svsupport@uwindSOR.ca). Or you can check out the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres in Ontario to figure out what the reporting or support options are in your area. And so that is at [sexualassaultsupport.ca](http://sexualassaultsupport.ca). So those are all of our support options. And just a reminder that all of the links for the things we chat about today will be provided in our episode description. And we also offer a transcript of our episode, which will be available shortly on our website. Thanks very much. And let's chat with Mary.

(Transition music)

Anne: All right. Welcome, Mary. Thanks so much for joining us today.

Mary: Thanks so much for having me, Anne. I'm super excited to be here.

Anne: So you work for REES. And that is the theme of our podcast. today. We're gonna chat about REES. What is REES? Can you describe that to our listeners?

Mary: Absolutely. REES is a simple, secure online platform for reporting campus sexual violence. REES actually stands for respect, educate, empower survivors. And I'll tell you why we're here we are super excited to announce that we have, REES has partnered with the University of Windsor. And we are launching REES on campus. I'm thinking even now as we speak. It's amazing for your campus community. And we've been thrilled to be able to, to work in partnership with the University of Windsor to enhance supports and resources for your campus community.

Anne: Yes, we are so excited about REES. And I think this podcast is going to be a great way for our folks to get acquainted with, you know, your platform, how it works, how they can use it, and what their options are. So I'm so happy to have you here today to chat.

Mary: Thank you so much. I'm great. Glad to be here.

Anne: So let's talk about how REES was created. I know that there were so many different considerations that shaped how this platform worked. It was very, very thoughtfully created. And I would love if you could tell our listeners a little bit about that process. Why does it exist? And then and then what were all the things you thought about when you were making it?

Mary: So the the the intention around developing REES goes back actually to about 2016 when I had opportunity to meet to two women who were featured in a film called The Hunting Ground. And I had the opportunity to meet Annie and Andrea, who were they were students who had experienced sexual assault on campus in the US. And really meeting them kind of set me down a path of looking and exploring around how do we build capacity here in Canada relating to online reporting, I had been working for about 20 years in the gender based violence space and more recently in the area of technology and gender based violence and kind of had heard of some other reporting options outside of Canada and really started to explore that. Kind of at that same time, you know, we have seen initiatives over the last number of years. You know, Silence is Violence out of U of T obviously Courage to Act in the last few years. There's been work out of out of BC and a western Canada sexual assault initiative. So there's been a lot of initiatives relating to campus sexual violence, specifically kind of further to me too. And what we saw over and over again, was a calling for anonymous reporting, increased reporting options, clear reporting, data collection, you know, accessible information about policies and resources, supports available on campuses and in communities. And so, as I say, it really took us down the path of saying, Okay, how do we make this? And how can we create a platform that can work in Canada, in the schools, you know, that that we can potentially partner with? And so we did a lot of collaboration, had a lot of conversations with students, with faculty with staff. We started the platform in Manitoba, and really engaged quite heavily here, across all of those spaces to see what what is it that was a priority for both survivors and students who would you know, kind of be the primary users of the platform, but also for administrators? Because it's very much a partnership with the University. It's not a here's a platform, here you go. It's a how do we work together to create safer campuses? And so we did, we met with with

students in Manitoba, but also from BC and Alberta, Ontario institutions and other provinces to really inform the platform, almost kind of line by line. We did 51 versions of the platform before we actually even started with any...

Anne: Wow.

Mary: Yeah, development on the tech side. So it was, as you say, we really wanted to take our time and create a platform that was going to meet the needs of all of the users. Mm hmm. So it's been Yeah, it's been, it's been a real amazing opportunity to bring, you know, community together, because we met all as well with sexual assault nurse examiner programs with community based sexual assault centers, with law enforcement. And so it's been very much a collaborative process, getting to where we are today.

Anne: That's amazing. So I'm wondering if you can walk us through what it would look like to report through REES. So let's say you are a student, we know that students are not the only ones who can use the platform. But for the sake of the conversation, let's say you're a student, and you're interested in reporting through REES, you head over to the website, which, you know, we'll have our link in the episode description. What does that look like? What is the process, like what options are available? Can you just kind of like, walk us through that process?

Mary: Sure. The the website address, [reescommunity.com/campus](https://reescommunity.com/campus), we'll take take a user, a survivor, a student, someone looking for, you know, supports or resources or information, or a friend maybe looking to support, it will take them to a drop down, and they're going to pick they're going to on the drop down, they're going to pick Ontario, and then they're going to pick the University of Windsor. And that's going to take them to a home page that has your information on it in terms of, you know, the offices contact information if someone is wanting to reach out directly. And when they use the platform, one of the really unique features about the platform is that it gives the survivor the user the opportunity to actually come in and create a record so they can they can almost use it as a journal space. And and in addition to filling out multiple choice questions, they can there's a narrative space there

where they can really put as much or as little information as they would want for themselves, and then can choose from multiple reporting options. And again, that was really important to us, we knew that trauma affects everyone differently. They may remember, and we wanted to create a space where they can, they can begin to write and they can they can leave it, they can come back to it on another day, they can save it. It's not a kind of one and done form that we see often being filled out. And for us being trauma informed and survivor centered was really important. And so really thinking about the user experience, and how someone kind of walked through the platform as they used it. And so they can create the record. Once they're done that they can save it and as they say they can they can leave it and think about kind of what do I want to do or, you know, when you know, think about the timing of when they might want to move forward in a different way. They have an option of doing an anonymous report, which would be the multiple choice questions that they would have filled out. And that goes essentially the anonymous reports get get pooled and we give those back to the institution as aggregate anonymous data. So you as an institution, University of Windsor can use that that information from survivors on when incidents occurring, where the recurring, you know, was there was the incident drug and alcohol facilitated? So it can provide some really valuable insights for the institution on enhancing security, potential policy considerations. Are there any targeted awareness campaigns, those kinds of things in enhancing your response on campus. And then in addition to that, there's a connect to my campus feature. And this actually connects them directly with you. So an email, an encrypted PDF, goes from REES directly to your office for for follow up, you know, either by you or by Dusty, you know, and can then obviously, you can help the students access whatever resources and supports they might need. We also have a feature called repeat perpetrator identification. And this is kind of we describe it as a matching feature. So it allows me as a user to come in. And I don't have to have had created a record in order to use what we call RPI. But it allows me to come in and provide some unique identifiers about the person that harmed me. Those kind of sit in a system. And if someone else comes in and provides those same unique identifiers, a matches made, and then that information is, again, sent by encrypted PDF to you at the institution. And then you consider do I have someone maybe

do we have someone in our campus community that is harmed multiple people? So it really can help help institutions from a, you know, a safety a community safety side of things. And then in addition to that, there's information about the Windsor, University of Windsor, sexual violence policies, community policy, investigation and complaints procedure, as well as on campus resources, and then community resources. So it's, you know, it's really intended to enhance and support what you're already doing. So that's pretty, pretty much an overview of REES.

Anne: Yeah, that's amazing. And I think I just love that there are so many choices, like you said, you can take as long as you want to decide if you want to send it to campus, or if you want to keep it or if you want to update it. And just from like our office's side of things like there is no timeline, it can be something that happened a week ago, a month ago, a year ago, like there really is no timeline for reaching out to us. So I love that your platform gives all of that functionality. And I love also that like we don't have access to any of the things that people upload, we can't go in as the institution and view the things that folks have, you know, submitted or are saving or working on unless they've decided to send them to us directly. Right. So can we talk a little bit about the confidentiality? How does that work?

Mary: Yeah, in addition to being trauma informed, and survivor centered, privacy and security was at the forefront, kind of, really, of all of our design and development decisions. One of the things well, we heard many things from students, but certainly one of the things that we heard, kind of loud and clear was just around institutional trust and institutional betrayal. And really, wanting wanting to create a space that users their information was was safe as they used it. So we all of the records that encrypt are that are written are created, they're encrypted. And as you say, we don't have extra access, there's a passphrase that's required there some kind of security features inside that allows someone to to create their own unique passphrase that they then use to essentially decrypt and encrypt, encrypt as they're moving through the platform. We don't gather IP addresses, we don't use cookies, we don't use a reason one cookie when you're in it, but we don't use any kind of tracking cookies. We don't use Google Analytics or any kind of

third party analytics. And again, those were really those were deliberate choices to make sure that we're creating a space that individuals are truly anonymous. And I think as we looked around kind of other, you know, maybe other platforms for other uses. They talk about anonymous reporting, but when you when you dig a little deeper in the privacy policy and the terms, in fact they're using they're using different ways of tracking and gathering information. That actually doesn't mean you're anonymous when you when you're creating the record. So those features were really important to us and then it and then it goes to you in a an encrypted PDF, as I said, as well, and it's password protected on your end. So the institution, you know, other than you, and Dusty in the, and the reports that are sent specifically to you, nobody has access to the information.

Anne: I love that I thought that part was so thoughtful and so well thought out. And I'm so grateful that you can kind of lay that out for the folks that are listening to us chat today. So one of the things that we also talked about was like, What is your best advice for survivors who are going to use the platform? I know, in the office, we've walked some survivors through the Windsor Police Online Reporting System. And so in Windsor, folks can report online to Windsor Police. And sometimes because that is, you know, an Online Reporting System folks do that, from home from their personal bed in the middle of the night, and we try to encourage them to maybe like create a self care plan around it. I was wondering what your thoughts are about like, what is your best advice for somebody who might be like sitting down to through to kind of write their report? And how can they take care of themselves while they're doing that?

Mary: That's a great question. And a really a really important thing for survivors and users to think about. Yeah, you know, part of the benefit of REES is that it's available 24/7. And that as long as you have access to the internet, at any time, any place, a survivor can, can come in and begin to create a record. And certainly everybody, everybody is different, how they want to interact with the platform is different, how they want to come forward or share their stories very different. And so I guess I would encourage folks to think about, you know, kind of what makes sense, in their own particular situation. Someone, someone, you know,

may may benefit from having supports available, so doing it, you know, during daytime hours, when they might be able to reach out to a friend or a family member or have someone nearby, you know, knowing that the the Windsor Essex Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, they have 24 hour supports that are available, so if someone is choosing to do it, you know, in off hours or on a weekend, that there are supports available in the community that can get that can help them if they need it. You know, as I say, everyone is different it might be, it might be, you know, creating a physical environment around you with with a candle lit and you know, wearing some things comfortable being in a comfortable space. You know, having having a preferred beverage or something to eat, or, you know, whatever it is your favorite blanket, or whatever it is that that can kind of help you help you in that process or be, you know, kind of soothing or comforting in that process. We also have some space in the website, on the there's an access support tab. And in there, there's some some breathing exercises and some information about grounding and self care. So, so I guess, I would encourage survivors to do whatever makes the most sense for them, but to at least maybe think a little, a little bit about what they may need in that process. So that they, you know, so that they don't take themselves down a path and then go, Oh, I'm, you know, I'm really feeling like I'm needing to talk to some someone or some kind of support and it for whatever reason might be might be challenging to obtain in that moment.

Anne: Absolutely, and I mean, folks could also, you know, like, make a preemptive appointment with us at the office, you could come and like, say, like, Okay, I'm gonna write my report on Tuesday, and I'm gonna see Anne or Dusty on a Wednesday, so that you kind of have that preset up. That's another option. But yeah, I love just like thinking about, like, what is the best for you, and I love that you're like, you know, it might be the best for you to do that in the middle of the night. It might be the best for you to do that during the daytime, just like thinking about what you need. Yeah, that is so excellent.

Mary: And everyone's going to be different in that right everyone, you know, people are going to come to the platform wanting different things, someone's gonna want to do anonymous report and maybe use none of the other features, someone might decide to do RPI. And I think for



us, agency was really important. You know, there's, there's, there's been an incident where there there were control essentially was taken from that individual. And so really wanting to wanting to be an empowering space where survivors can kind of, you know, claim, again, how they, how they if and how they want to put that information out in the world.

Anne: Yeah, I love that. And so I think this kind of like dovetails nicely into just, um, I know that we've talked before about how REES is like a it's like an additional tool that works with the office. And so I feel like maybe it's a good idea for us to just highlight that like using REES doesn't mean you can't reach out to the office or that you can't access any of the other services on campus. It's just like one of many options.

Mary: Yeah, absolutely, that's exactly right. You know, we're not intending to replace any existing processes or systems that might be in place, but really to enhance, you know, to expand, expand the opportunities that the University of Windsor and in particular, the office have to connect with the with the campus community and those that have experienced. And I think this is an important point to make, experience any unwanted sexualized behaviors, you know, we can we can think about, you know, kind of maybe some of the obvious behaviors that might occur on a campus that I would want to report about, but I think, you know, we know that rape culture is pervasive on campuses, and, and this is an opportunity to report things that you might not normally they may not normally find their way to your office, because they might think, Oh, well, you know, there's nothing, there's nothing my institution can do about this, or, you know, it was a comment, it was a joke, I was in a, at an event or, you know, in a classroom or in a meeting, and it really made me feel uncomfortable. And I think when we're looking to, you know, prevent, prevent, and address sexual violence on campus, there's such a range of behaviours that it's important for the institution to know about. And so I would really want to stress that this can be a place where you might bring forward, whether it be anonymous reports, you know, or in connecting directly to my campus, but bring forward those those unwanted sexualized behaviors that you may or may not seek support over. But where it really could benefit the institution to have an understanding of, you know, kind of that that culture that may exist on a campus. And then as you seem to be able to do that in conjunction

with, you know, the office that already exists. And then you also have other great programs, like, you know, there's Flip the Script, there's Bystander. So really working with working with Windsor, really, as just a part of your response to preventing and addressing sexual violence on campus.

Anne: Yes, we are so excited about this partnership. And I think it's just going to add, like, another layer of options for folks. And I could see this being like, you know, such a good experience for somebody who wants to make that record and wants to kind of like, store their data. So we're just very excited to have this platform coming to our campus.

Mary: Well, and we're super excited. We have been, as you know, we have been in conversations with with your office, I think, since November of last year. So you know, it's been a it's been a process. And I think this type of reporting is new in Canada. It's not, it's not being used. And certainly, you know, we're in Manitoba, we're in British Columbia, we're in conversations with most of the provinces. And we're, we're super honoured to be to be leading this work in Ontario with the University of Windsor and working with you and Dusty, you know, as well as the other folks who are leading the sexual violence work at your institution to make this available to your campus community. It's really exciting for us.

Anne: Yes, so awesome. So for our last question, is there anything else you would like folks to know about REES that we haven't talked about yet? Or do you have any, like, last thoughts that you want to leave us with?

Mary: I guess my final thoughts before we, before we wrap up for today, would really be you know, in speaking to survivors out there, in speaking to folks that have experienced any kind of unwanted, you know, sexualized behavior or really any unwanted behavior of any kind that, that it's not your fault, and that you're not alone. And that, you know, our tagline is we're here to hear and, you know, just just to remind people that there are supports out there, there's a caring community, certainly we've experienced that at Windsor. You know, there's supports both on campus in your community, REES is now available. You know, do do what makes sense for you and do what's

best for you and think about what you need. But very much just know that that message that you're not alone, and that there's lots of folks who are here to support you and believe you.

Anne: Oh, I love that whenever I do presentations, I'm always like, just want everyone to know, we care so much about you. We just want you to be like having the best time that you possibly can on our campus and like, you know if there's anything we can do to like help you out? Let us know because we want to hear from you. Oh, so I love that that's so important.

Mary: Well, I might you know, I'm I'm a mum and I have I have five sons who are all kind of university ish age. You know, and and this time should be a time of yeah, coming to school and you know, just just being part of an, you know, that amazing community and I remember when I went to university all the all the opportunities and the promise that that we go to post secondary with and so just wanting to make sure that you know individuals who, yeah, that they just feel supported and and know that there's that community of care around them who can. Yeah, who can help. There's lots of helpers in the community.

Anne: Love that. Well, thank you so much for hanging out with me today and for chatting about REES. And for the folks that are listening, we'll have all of the links in our episode descriptions, you can check it out for yourself, if you'd like to take a look at it. And we'll have our contact info in there too. So if you have any questions and want to reach out we are here.

Mary: Okay.

Anne: Um, so yeah, just thanks again. Mary was so nice to chat with you today.

Mary: Thank you. That's great. Thanks so much. And I'll just encourage listeners too, we're on Instagram, if you want to give us a follow at REES community, or here, we're on social or on Facebook or on Twitter. So you know, I know students might be inclined to catch us that way. And I'll just, I'll mention one more thing that just popped into my head before we go. We have a Youth Advisory Board. And we have one of the

folks from the Student Association involved in it. One of your members, hey, is on our Youth Advisory Board. And that's a group of students from across the country, helping to inform the work, so we're excited to be not only working there, but also connecting with Windsor and staying connected on the student side of things. So that's super, super awesome. So we're, we're here and we're happy to connect with the whole community.

(Transition music)

Anne: So that is our chat with Mary from REES. And just remember you can find all that info in our episode description as well as some options for support. You can also reach out to us at [svsupport@uwindsor.ca](mailto:svsupport@uwindsor.ca) And remember to like and subscribe. Thanks so much.