ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

REPORT ON LESSONS LEARNED

Closing the Justice Gap
Online Third-Party Reporting for Sexual Assault Survivors in Alberta

March 2026

Women and Gender Equality Canada
Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA SEXUAL ASSAULT SERVICES

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While the project did not proceed to implementation, the collective efforts of all involved have generated important insights that will inform future initiatives across Alberta and beyond.

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REPORT ON LESSONS LEARNED

Closing the Justice Gap: On Line Third-Party Reporting for Sexual Assault Survivors in Alberta

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) is a provincial leader representing 15 sexual assault services across more than 40 Alberta communities. For over four decades, AASAS and its members have worked to increase access to healing, recovery, and justice for people affected by sexual violence. In 2023, AASAS sought to expand police reporting options for survivors of sexual violence through the development of a province-wide, secure, anonymous online Third-Party Reporting (TPR) platform. In-person TPR models in other Canadian provinces and territories successfully offer an anonymous option to share information with police without triggering an immediate investigation, but limited public data exists regarding their long-term outcomes or impact.

Sexual violence remains both prevalent and underreported in Alberta. Research commissioned by AASAS found that 43% of Albertans have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime and 34% experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18. Yet reporting rates to police remain at approximately 6%, unchanged for over three decades. Survivors, particularly Indigenous women, Black women, women of colour, women living with disabilities, transgender and queer individuals, women living in poverty, and those engaged in sex work, face systemic barriers rooted in sexism, colonialism, racism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia. For many, reporting to police feels unsafe or inaccessible.

The project was funded through the Government of Canada's Ministry of Women and Gender Equality as part of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. Its purpose was to create a survivor-centred reporting option for individuals who experience sexual violence at disproportionately high rates and who face significant barriers to reporting to police. The vision for the platform was to allow survivors to share information anonymously, access supports, and retain control over whether and when to initiate a formal police investigation. A central design objective was ensuring the use of the platform would not compromise any future investigation or prosecution should a survivor later decide to report.

To guide development of Alberta's online TPR model, AASAS adopted a collaborative, multi-sector approach. Three Advisory Committees were established: representatives from sexual assault services; agencies and individuals serving Indigenous and equity-deserving groups; and legal process experts, including police and Crown counsel. Over 18 months, five iterations of the platform were developed, informed by extensive consultation, expert analysis, and evaluation planning. The platform was built on the Canadian REES (Respect, Educate, Empower Survivors) model and adapted for Alberta's policing jurisdictions.

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During extensive consultations, legal process experts identified significant investigative and legal concerns. These included the potential for survivor-written journal entries and multiple saved versions of statements to be subject to production applications and cross-examination, and the risk that AASAS could be deemed an "agent of the state" due to collaboration with police and Crown. If so, AASAS could be legally required to preserve and produce records, something incompatible with AASAS' mandate and the platform's end-to-end encryption and privacy protections. Legal process experts warned that these issues posed a risk to the integrity of future prosecutions and could potentially result in a stay of proceedings.

Despite extensive dialogue and legal analysis, the project reached an impasse. The core tension lay in reconciling two legitimate but competing priorities: maximizing survivor privacy, autonomy, and independence from systems, and ensuring the integrity and producibility of evidence in criminal proceedings. The stronger the platform's anonymity and privacy protections, the greater the legal risk to future prosecutions. The stronger the pathway to reporting to police, the fewer survivor centred options available.

In addition, concerns emerged regarding the limitations of anonymous online reporting for investigative purposes, the inability of technology alone to replace culturally grounded human support, and the financial resources required to ensure full accessibility across diverse communities. Persistent gaps in reliable internet access in rural and remote areas further complicated equitable implementation.

After careful consideration and consultation with Women and Gender Equality Canada, AASAS and its Advisory Committees made the difficult decision not to proceed with the online TPR platform as originally envisioned. While the project did not culminate in implementation, it generated significant insight into the legal, ethical, relational, and technological complexities of expanding survivor-centred reporting options.

This report documents the rationale, development process, challenges, key learnings, and recommendations arising from this initiative. It is intended to inform policymakers, justice system partners, community agencies, and national stakeholders seeking to strengthen access to justice for survivors of sexual violence.

The recommendations emphasize the importance of sustained community engagement, clarity of purpose among justice partners, informed consent, adequate resourcing for accessibility, and ongoing advocacy to address structural barriers such as rural internet access.

Together, these lessons underscore how improving reporting options is not solely a technical undertaking, but a systemic and relational one requiring shared commitment, transparency, and collaboration.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS) provides leadership, coordination, collaboration and a unified voice on issues of sexual violence. With a membership made up of 15 sexual assault services with sites in over 40 communities, AASAS strives to increase public and government awareness of sexual violence and access to healing, recovery and justice for Albertans affected by sexual violence.

Access to justice for those who have experienced sexual violence has always been an AASAS priority. For over 30 years, Alberta's sexual assault services have provided specialized police and court support services to individuals faced with navigating their way through the criminal justice system. In 2011, AASAS, along with member agency Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA), launched the "Third Option" program for sexual assault evidence collection in Calgary, allowing individuals to securely store evidence for up to a year without immediately reporting to police, giving them time to heal, recover and consider their options for seeking justice. Since then, the "Third Option" program has expanded to many other communities throughout Alberta.

In 2023, when the Government of Canada's Ministry of Women and Gender Equality called for applications to strengthen Canada's gender-based violence sector, AASAS applied and was successful. AASAS planned to develop an online third-party system for reporting sexual violence in Alberta. Third-party reporting (TPR) creates an option for survivors to share information with police without immediately triggering an investigation, helping bridge the gap between the occurrence of the offense and formal reporting. Like Alberta's successful "Third Option" program, it was AASAS' hope the online third-party reporting system would address gaps in access to justice for people who have experienced sexual violence, particularly those who are most frequently targeted, reluctant to report to the police, and face significant barriers when seeking justice.

Sexual violence is a pressing public health and safety issue. In 2019, AASAS and Malatest, a Canadian research firm, randomly sampled and surveyed 1496 Albertans about their

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experiences with sexual violence[1]. They found the prevalence of sexual violence in Alberta to be high. Research results indicated 43% of Albertans experienced at least one incident of sexual assault in their lifetime and 34% experienced sexual abuse before the age of 18.

Stories from those who experience sexual violence, along with decades of Canadian research, describe the multiple barriers survivors face in accessing justice. In 1993, a Statistics Canada study revealed only 6% of sexually assaulted Canadians reported the crime to police,[2] and over thirty years later, this rate still remains unchanged.[3] The majority of survivors choose not to report to police for multiple reasons including victim-blaming myths and stereotypes, fears of not being believed, internalized blame and shame, lack of faith in the Canadian criminal justice system, as well as risks to safety, income, housing and child custody.[4]

Sexual violence is a crime of power and control.[5] It is the result of power imbalances that stem from attitudes and beliefs about those who are valued and privileged and those who are not. These attitudes and beliefs such as sexism, colonialism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and others are the root cause of sexual violence and that is why women and girls[6], Indigenous women[7], Black women and women of color[8], women living with disabilities[9],

[1] Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, *Summary of Key Findings: Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Child Sexual Abuse in Alberta* (2020), https://aasas.ca/about-sexual-violence/sexual-assault/.
[2] Statistics Canada, *The Violence Against Women Survey: Highlights*, The Daily, November 18, 1993.
[3] Adam Cotter, *Criminal Justice Outcomes of Sexual Assault in Canada, 2015 to 2019* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2024).
[4] Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, *Rethinking Justice for Survivors of Sexual Violence: A Systemic Investigation* (Government of Canada, November 19, 2025), https://www.canada.ca/en/office-federal-ombudsperson-victims-crime/ssisa-essas/rethinkingrepenser.html.
[5] Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, *About Sexual Violence: Scope of the Problem* (February 15, 2026), https://aasas.ca/about-sexual-violence/scope-of-the-problem/.
[6] AASAS, *Summary of Key Findings*.
[7] Shannon Brennan, *Violence Victimization of Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Provinces, 2009* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2011).
[8] Ombudsperson, *Rethinking Justice*.
[9] A. M. Amborski, E. Bussières, M. Vaillancourt-Morel, et al., "Sexual Violence Against Persons with Disabilities: A Meta-Analysis," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 23, no. 4 (2021): 1330–1343, https://doi.org/10.1177/152483802199597

transgender women, queer and bisexual women[10], women living in poverty[11] or engaged in sex work[12] are targeted more often and experience the highest rates of sexual violence in Canada.

These same attitudes and beliefs also make it so these survivors are the least likely to be believed and supported by professionals and the most likely to experience barriers when seeking justice.[13] For these individuals, reporting sexual assault to police often feels unsafe and inaccessible.

This leaves 94% of sexual assault victims of crime unable and/or unwilling to enact their rights to justice under Canadian law. Faith in the Canadian criminal justice system remains diminished and sexual offenders are not held accountable for the crimes they have committed.

Social policy analysts, victim's advocates, law enforcement, and Crown Prosecutors have long talked about the need to address this gap. In 2018, the Government of Alberta's Sexual Violence Police Advisory Committee (SVPAC) identified enhancing the justice response by exploring third-party reporting as a priority.

In April 2021, the Government of Canada National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence noted the need to increase access to the criminal justice system, as well as enhance support for victims. In March 2023, the Mass Casualty Commission recommended developing safe spaces through which people affected by domestic and sexual violence can report and seek help.

Spurred on by these social policy recommendations, along with the stories of the challenges and barriers faced by survivors seeking support from Alberta's sexual assault services, AASAS and partners at RCMP K Division began to explore the creation of an Alberta third-party reporting model, reflective of Alberta resources and needs, in an online format.

[10] Laura Simpson, "Violent Victimization of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in Canada, 2014," *Juristat* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2018), Catalogue no. 85-002-X.
[11] Ombudsperson, *Rethinking Justice*.
[12] Ombudsperson, *Rethinking Justice*.
[13] Ombudsperson, *Rethinking Justice*.

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THIRD-PARTY REPORTING IN CANADA

When the 6% report to police, they do so to from a deep sense of responsibility to protect others.[14] Of 1000 people surveyed in the Federal Ombudspersons for Victims of Crime "Rethinking Justice Report", 4 out of 5 individuals said they reported to police to prevent others from being harmed and 3 out of 4 individuals said holding the person who harmed others accountable was very important to them.

In Canada, anonymous third-party reporting (TPR) is a survivor centred option allowing someone who has experienced sexual violence to provide information to police without immediately revealing their identity or starting a formal criminal investigation. The TPR model came about following the Robert Pickton cases in British Columbia in the late 80's and the Paul Bernardo cases in Ontario in the 90's. These cases highlighted how our Canadian institutions respond to sexual violence and the risks to public safety of dismissing marginalized voices.

The Canadian TPR model was developed to address common barriers to reporting such as fear, shame, retaliation concerns, distrust of the system or uncertainty about proceeding. Currently there are active TPR programs in British Columbia, Manitoba, the Yukon Territory and Ontario. While models vary by province and police service, the core structure is similar.

Third-party reporting (TPR) is initiated by an individual who has been sexually assaulted speaking to a community agency. If the individual does not want to report to police, the option of TPR is presented. The individual completes a standardized form describing the crime. Police receive the report but the survivor's name and identifying details are not shared with police. There is no immediate police investigation, however the information provided by the individual to police may be used to identify patterns, corroborate other complainants, and flag potential public safety risks. At any time during this process, the survivor can opt to make a formal report to police, the third-party report is then connected to the complainant, and an investigation is initiated.

The intention of the Canadian TPR model is to provide an anonymous reporting option that offers survivors choice, control, and agency. Never is there an obligation or pressure for the survivor to make a formal report to police. Survivors participate because there is no risk of system involvement and they are able to contribute towards preventing the crime from happening to others. In turn, participating in the TPR process can sometimes leads to police

[14] Ombudsperson, *Rethinking Justice*.

reporting and may result in trust being built between survivor communities and law enforcement.

TPR does expand reporting options for survivors and captures information about crimes that wouldn't otherwise be known, but it does not trigger investigations or arrests, or preserve evidence that would benefit investigation or prosecution. Even though TPR in Canada started as early as the 80's, there is currently no publicly available data set indicating TPR has led to investigations, charges, convictions, or pattern identification and therefore current knowledge of the efficacy of the model is limited.

Would an Alberta-wide online TPR platform provide opportunities to capture provincial data and trends? Would it allow individuals in rural communities, where resources are scarce, to access otherwise unattainable justice supports? Would it provide a more accessible and anonymous option for individuals who do not trust the criminal justice system and are unwilling to come forward? Would there be efficiencies or cost-saving measures in terms of human resources within a sector where the demand for service outweighs the resources available?

With these questions in mind, AASAS set out to develop a province-wide, survivor-centred, accessible, securely encrypted and anonymous online third-party reporting platform, helpful to the needs of all survivors, trauma-informed, and designed in a way that it would not harm investigation or prosecution if a survivor chooses to report to police through the platform or in person after using the platform.

THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING ONLINE THIRD-PARTY REPORTING IN ALBERTA

AASAS began by hiring a Project Coordinator and identifying an online platform for reporting sexual harassment, misconduct and assault already in operation in Canada called REES (Respect, Educate Empower Survivors). The plan was to adapt the platform to meet the needs of province-wide online third-party police reporting.

Above all, AASAS wanted the platform to be guided by the needs of survivors. The initial project objectives were to:

- Connect survivors to support and resources such as Alberta's ONE LiNE for Sexual Violence and information about sexual violence, survivor rights and the criminal justice system.
- Enhance access to justice through increased reporting options for survivors.

- Ensure the platform is accessible and easy to use.
- Collect aggregate violent crime data to inform public safety, policy and practice.

The project adopted a multi-sector, collaborative approach. The following three stakeholder Advisory Committees met frequently throughout the project, significantly influencing project direction and design:

Agencies and Individuals Serving Indigenous Peoples and Equity Deserving Communities:

- Representatives from 11 agencies, survivors, and individual community advocates supporting survivors.
- This committee provided direction and guidance to AASAS regarding the needs of survivors from Indigenous and equity-deserving communities, those who face sexual violence at the highest rates and multiple barriers to accessing services and justice.

The Sexual Assault Services of Alberta:

- Representatives from nine (out of fifteen) sexual assault services in Alberta acting as sexual violence trauma and service delivery experts.

Legal Process Experts:

- Representatives from 4 Police Forces, 3 Crown Counsel, 1 representative from the Government of Alberta's Public Safety and Emergency Services department, 1 representative from the Government of Alberta's Status of Women department.
- This committee served as the project's process and procedure experts related to the Criminal Justice system response (investigation, prosecution).

An evaluation framework was finalized, complete with purpose, objectives, collection methods, intended outcomes, indicators, and data sources. The final framework included unique surveys for each stakeholder group, including:

- Survey for Sexual Assault Services and Indigenous and Equity Deserving Groups
- Survey for Police, Crown Counsel and Government
- Survey for Survivors of Sexual Violence
- Interview Questions for Survivors of Sexual Assault

Development of the design of the online reporting platform was undertaken through an intensive consultative process with input from the three Advisory Committees, the platform developer as well as numerous external consultants and experts. The feedback provided on the draft design and content during these consultations resulted in five iterations of the platform over a period of 18 months.

AASAS was building the final version of the platform with the developer when feedback came in from legal process experts posing a major challenge to implementing the online reporting platform as originally intended.

After multi-month discussions with external consultants and analysis of case law, AASAS and Advisory Committee members agreed not to proceed with the online reporting platform as originally envisioned. Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) were consulted and agreed; AASAS had reached an impasse and could not continue as originally planned. To complete the project, WAGE encouraged AASAS to share their learnings with others in the national sexual violence sector so they might avoid these pitfalls should they pursue similar initiatives in the future.

DISCUSSION

Alberta's online Third-Party Reporting (TPR) platform was developed to provide a survivor-centred reporting option for individuals who experience sexual assault at the highest rates and face significant barriers to reporting to police. The goal was to create a platform accessible to all Albertans, particularly those who are reluctant to seek support from sexual assault centres or report directly to police. An equally important objective was to ensure the use of the platform would not compromise future investigations or prosecutions if a survivor later chose to proceed with a police report. Ultimately, it was not possible to meet all of these objectives within a single project. The challenges in finding common ground were so significant that the project could not move forward.

The following sections of the report discuss the cumulative effect of three main barriers AASAS and the three Advisory Committees faced in realizing their original project vision.

Differing Professional Mandates

The tensions of differing professional mandates appeared frequently throughout the TPR development process and ultimately led to an impasse.

AASAS and members of all three Advisory Committees share a common commitment to public safety and offender accountability. As the Advisory Committees worked together, differences emerged, not in values, but in the primary responsibilities guiding each profession's mandate.

Law enforcement officers are entrusted with protecting communities, upholding the rights of victims, and investigating alleged crimes. Their role requires them to prioritize public safety,

gather reliable evidence, and ensure accountability under the law. Similarly, prosecutors represent the public interest, not individual victims, and are responsible for prosecuting offences against society. Their decisions must be guided by legal standards, evidentiary requirements, and broader considerations of community safety. At times, these obligations can require actions that do not align with a particular survivor's preferences, particularly when public safety or legal integrity is at stake.

Survivors, survivor advocates, and sexual assault service providers operate from a different, though equally important, mandate. While they also value accountability and safety, their primary focus is on maximizing survivor choice, agency, dignity, and psychological well-being. They are not decision-makers in investigations or prosecutions, but they are central to how survivors experience those processes. Positioned closest to survivors' lived realities, advocates work to ensure individuals feel heard, believed, and supported, even when justice system decisions move forward in ways the survivor may not have chosen. These distinct yet legitimate mandates help explain why tensions arose during the project: each sector was working to uphold its professional responsibilities, even when those responsibilities were difficult to reconcile within a single online model.

The development of Alberta's online TPR platform was guided by a commitment to survivor choice, and agency. Advisory Committee members serving Indigenous and other equity-deserving communities saw great value in the platform operating independently from law enforcement. They emphasized survivors must be able to document and store their experiences securely, without immediate police involvement. To support informed choice, AASAS clearly outlined the limits of confidentiality and the risk of records being subpoenaed if a survivor later chose to report to police.

However, legal risks for survivors who used the platform and then decided to report to police remained. The platform incorporated an open text section, referred to by AASAS as a "journal" where survivors could record their thoughts and feelings. Platform design also allowed for survivors to revisit, revise, and refine their records over time as they continue to process their experience. The platform design however does not include an "overwrite" function; and therefore, all prior versions of survivor records are retained.

Legal process experts advised that survivor-written "journal" entries and multiple saved versions of statements could be subject to production applications under the Criminal Code of Canada and potentially analyzed for any changes made to it and inconsistencies with statements given to police or in cross examination.

More significantly, legal process experts warned that because AASAS had collaborated with police and Crown in developing the platform, a court could find AASAS to be an "agent of the state." If so, AASAS would have a legal obligation to preserve and produce survivor records, something AASAS could not do due to the platform's end-to-end encryption and privacy protections. This could result in a stay of proceedings, preventing a survivor's case from continuing.

After extensive discussions with Advisory Committees, external consultants and analysis of case law, Advisory Committee members agreed not to proceed with the online reporting platform as originally envisioned based on the following rationale:

- The significant risks to survivor's privacy, choice, and control.
- AASAS perceived as an "Agent of State". This is in direct contradiction to AASAS' mandate, principles, and beliefs, posing a risk for AASAS, all Alberta survivors, and sexual assault services.
- Alberta Crown Prosecution Services did not feel they could successfully argue against these two concerns in Court.

These concerns created an unresolvable clash of professional mandates. AASAS and community partners were committed to maximizing survivor privacy, control, and independence from systems. Crown prosecutors and law enforcement, by contrast, are mandated to ensure the integrity and producibility of evidence in criminal proceedings. The stronger the platform's privacy protections, the greater the legal risk to future prosecutions.

Ultimately, these competing obligations could not be reconciled within a securely encrypted online TPR model, and the project did not proceed as originally envisioned.

Online Format

AASAS and Advisory Committee members were initially encouraged by the privacy, anonymity, and accessibility an online platform could offer, particularly for individuals who may feel unsafe or reluctant to approach police or mainstream services. As development of the platform progressed, however, it became clear that these same features created complex challenges. Concerns emerged about

- how anonymous information could be used in police investigations,
- whether technology alone could meet survivors' needs for individualized and culturally responsive support, and
- the reality that many rural and remote communities continue to face limited or unreliable internet access.

Representatives from Indigenous and other equity-deserving groups emphasized anonymity is not simply a preference, but often a condition of safety. For many individuals who have experienced systemic discrimination, over-policing, or harm within institutions, the option to share information without immediately engaging law enforcement can reduce risk and increase trust. Advisory Committee members also highlighted how survivors wanted to anonymously document the characteristics of people who cause harm to help prevent harm to others, even if they were not ready to pursue a formal report.

In contrast, the four consulting police services raised concerns about receiving encrypted, anonymous reports that could not be verified. They noted the possibility of duplicate, false, or malicious submissions and advised that unverified information could not be reliably entered into investigative systems such as ViCLAS. In light of these competing considerations, project partners decided not to implement the individual anonymous report to police option or repeat perpetrator indicator feature.

Throughout the process, the Indigenous and equity deserving groups Advisory Committee members consistently underscored how technology cannot replace human connection. Survivors benefit from direct, specialized, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded support. Advisory Committee members noted individuals who disclose sexual violence are more likely to do so within organizations connected to their cultural, community, or social identities, where relationships of trust already exist, not necessarily to sexual assault centres or an online platform hosted by them. Similarly, the Sexual Assault Services Advisory Committee emphasized the importance of ensuring that survivors considering their options are connected to specialized support and accurate information. This connection enables survivors to make informed decisions as they navigate the criminal legal system and access appropriate services.

AASAS incorporated multiple pathways within the platform to connect survivors with tailored information, connection to specialized services and local supports, and committed to training and collaboration with community agencies to enhance access for Indigenous and equity deserving groups. At the same time, it was acknowledged how culturally safe, identity-affirming, and specialized services and support is often best delivered through human interaction.

Finally, the lack of reliable internet access in many rural and remote communities remains a significant barrier to equitable access, an issue that extends beyond this project and continues to require broader advocacy and systemic solutions.

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Community Engagement and Accessibility

Barriers experienced by Indigenous and equity-deserving groups are not simply matters of awareness or willingness to report. They are rooted in the ongoing impacts of colonialism, systemic discrimination, structural inequities, and unequal access to services. Meaningfully addressing these barriers requires culturally safe, trauma-informed, community-led, and equity-focused approaches, not only procedural reforms within existing justice systems.

A critical strength of the online TPR project was the guidance provided by the Indigenous and Equity Deserving Groups Advisory Committee. In 2024, AASAS facilitated 17 consultations with 16 agencies and subject-matter experts across Alberta. Eleven participants continued their involvement as active Advisory Committee members. Their contributions were generous, thoughtful, and deeply supportive of efforts to improve reporting options for survivors. There was strong interest in seeing the platform move forward, alongside a shared commitment to ongoing collaboration and accountability.

In principle, an online platform has the potential to increase accessibility and better respond to diverse needs. However, AASAS underestimated the financial resources required to build specialized accessibility features such as multilingual options, text-to-voice and voice-to-text functions, and the integration of visuals, graphics, and video supports.

The platform was built on the existing REES model, which is used for anonymous reporting in post-secondary institutions, workplaces, and community settings. Significant customization was required to adapt it for police-reporting pathways across Alberta's jurisdictions. As a result, considerable funding was directed toward technical modifications to route police reports appropriately, leaving limited resources to expand accessibility features. While AASAS incorporated plain-language content and high-contrast design to improve readability, it recognized that these measures alone were insufficient to ensure equitable access for all survivors.

Taken together, these intersecting barriers, differing professional mandates, the complexities of an online and anonymous format, and the significant resource requirements needed to ensure meaningful accessibility and community responsiveness, demonstrate how ambitious the original vision for Alberta's online TPR platform truly was. The project illuminated not only the promise of innovative reporting options, but also the legal, ethical, technological, and relational constraints that must be addressed to avoid unintended harm to survivors or to the integrity of future prosecutions. While the platform did not proceed as initially envisioned, the extensive collaboration, consultation, and analysis undertaken through this initiative generated valuable insights.

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The following Recommendations section builds on these learnings, identifying practical and principled steps to strengthen survivor-centred reporting options in Alberta while respecting the distinct mandates of justice system partners and community-based advocates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are grounded in the lessons learned through extensive collaboration with sexual assault services, Indigenous and equity-deserving stakeholders, law enforcement, and prosecutors. Together, these recommendations offer practical considerations for designing online TPR models that are ethical, equitable, and sustainable.

1. To jointly create a culturally safe, trauma-informed, community-led, and equity-focused platform design, be prepared to invest significant time and resources in community engagement and building trusting, reciprocal and on-going relationships with individuals and agencies serving Indigenous and equity deserving communities.

2. Before project initiation, have conversations with law enforcement and prosecution about differing professional mandates and determine priorities for the purpose of the platform.
    a. Is the priority to provide an alternate reporting option for survivors who may never report to police?
    b. Is the priority to ensure no harm occurs to the investigation and prosecutorial processes should those same survivors change course and decide to report to police?
    c. With an encrypted, anonymous online platform, these two priorities cannot co-exist.

3. Ensure free, informed and ongoing consent for survivors who use the platform by following the Tri-council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2022) and clearly identify and communicate any and all risks survivors may encounter in using the platform.

4. Estimate costs in advance and ensure you have the funds required to accommodate accessibility features within the platform design features such as; multi-lingual capabilities, 'text to voice' and 'voice to text', plain language, adjustable font size, contrasting colors, and use of videos.

5. Consider staffing the platform, part-time or full-time as budgets permit, to provide individualized, trauma-informed, culturally and identity-safe information and supports. This could involve a hybrid model combining the online platform with an in-person intake providing individualized and specialized supports.

6. Continue to work with federal and provincial/territorial governments to advocate for reliable internet services in rural and remote communities.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, these recommendations emphasize improving reporting options for survivors is not solely a technical undertaking, but a relational, ethical, and systemic one. Advancing meaningful change will require sustained collaboration, clarity of purpose, adequate resourcing, and a shared commitment to centring survivor safety and dignity while respecting the legal responsibilities of justice system partners. With thoughtful planning and continued partnership, future initiatives can build on these learnings to strengthen access to justice in ways that are responsive, inclusive, and accountable.

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