



Since January 20, 2025, things have drastically changed for our Immigrant clients, especially those that are undocumented. In an unprecedented move, Immigration Authorities recently added 700,000 administrative warrants to the Federal database (NCIC) that had been reserved for major criminal offenses. What this means for our clients is if they have any immigration holds or an administrative warrant more than likely it is now in this database.

At any scene of any crime from a homicide to a traffic stop, including a domestic violence call, Law Enforcement Officers will usually run the parties involved. Meaning that if a client calls 911 and officers respond, more than likely they will be run through the national (NCIC), state (TCIC) and local (CCH) databases and if a criminal warrant pops up they will be arrested, if an administrative warrant is found ICE will more than likely be called and it will be up to ICE as to what will happen. They can choose not to send an agent out; law enforcement can wait for a period of time and then leave the scene. However, ICE will now know about the warrant and the individual, including where they live and possibly come out at another time.

An administrative warrant is issued by an agency like ICE rather than by a Judge or a Magistrate. These warrants do not require a judge to review them for probable cause to establish if there is enough evidence to deport an individual. They still have a right to have their day in court, but they could still be detained in an Immigration facility. However, this type of warrant does authorize an arrest, but it **DOES NOT** grant ICE agents the authority to enter a home or private space without consent.

In another blow for our clients, HPD's Policy is for officers to call ICE whenever they find someone has an administrative warrant to see if ICE is going to send an agent. It does however leave some discretion to supervisors. And as we know, officers, like they do when calling D.A. Intake for charges, can influence the outcome of that call. And another setback, the Texas Legislature recently passed, and the Governor signed SB 8 which will require Texas Sheriff Offices to enter into a cooperative agreement with ICE for immigration enforcement. This goes into effect on January 1, 2026. <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=89R&Bill=SB8>

On the bright side, the Harris County District Attorney's Office is having their Investigators issue a "Yellow Card" to victims and witnesses in cases where charges are filed. The information on these cards state, "this person is a victim or witness to a crime under this cause number." It gives ICE the number to D.A. Intake with instructions to ask for the Investigator on Duty to verify the authenticity of the card and if they are in fact a victim or a witness.

Just know that we are not alone in Harris County about our fears for our clients. The [Alliance for Immigrant Survivors](#) recently published the results of a survey – [Fear and Silence: 2025 Insights from Advocates for Immigrant Survivors](#). This report, based on responses from over 170 advocates and legal professionals across the country, revealed 76% of advocates have observed that immigrant survivors have concerns about contacting the police to report domestic violence and sexual assault and 70% reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to their abuser.

So, what can we do to support our clients:

- Become familiar with what rights immigrant survivors have. A good resource from the Immigrant Legal Resource Center <https://www.ilrc.org/community-resources/know-your-rights/know-your-rights-when-confronted-ice-flyer>
- While we recognize that you might not want to discuss with your client their immigration status, you can speak in general terms like “We are giving this information to all of our clients- Know your Rights” or “It is important to know the status of all your court cases including if there are any kinds of warrants out for you”.
- Local organizations that can help:
 - <https://www.tahirih.org/>
 - <https://advocatesforsurvivors.org/>
 - <https://bakerripley.org/>
 - <https://catholiccharities.org/>
 - <https://ghirp.org/>
 - <https://www.justiceforallimmigrants.org/>
 - <https://www.ilrc.org/community-resources>
- Again, speaking in general terms, include the threat of detention by Immigration in your safety planning:
 - Is calling Law Enforcement the best option for them? Plan other avenues for their safety.
 - Make sure they have a few important phone numbers like a relative, advocate, or lawyer memorized so they can call from the Detention Center if they are detained.
 - Plan as to where their children will go. Is there a safe person for them to stay with?
 - Have they or do they want to contact an Immigration Advocacy Agency or a lawyer?
 - Always make sure **BEFORE** they leave with any type of law enforcement personnel or an ICE Agent that they are in fact a legitimate officer or agent not someone impersonating one that could be associated with the abuser. Always ask for their official ID. Call 911 if someone shows up and will not show you their ID.
 - If they are not detained but have a date to appear for any immigration issues, safety plan with them around going to the Immigration Office or Court
 - Alerting security that the abuser might be around
 - Find a place to sit surrounded by other people
 - Be aware of their surroundings walking to and from the building, walk with a group of people if possible
 - Be aware of their surroundings when walking around the building including using the restroom, go with another person if possible