

NYPD Issues Memo Ordering Cops to Run Criminal Checks on Domestic Abuse Victims



(Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images)

by [Jorge Rivas](#), Monday, March 18 2013, 11:52 AM EST

[The New York Post](#) is reporting that a new memo sent out by the Chief of Detectives Phil Pulaski “requires detectives to look at open warrants, complaint histories and even the driving records” of domestic abuse victims.

[The NY post has the details:](#)

The directive tells detectives that when they are investigating cases of domestic violence, they should run a search that cross-references all NYPD databases.

[...]

Beside warrants, a person’s criminal record and history of making criminal complaints should be checked, the directive says.

[Gawker](#) published a statement from the NYPD saying they’ll indeed run background checks but that the department has no “must arrest” policy.

“While it is standard practice and policy for detectives to investigate victims’ backgrounds to help lead them to the victims’ assailants, the NYPD - contrary to a published report - has no “must arrest” policy that applies to domestic violence victims. In fact, the discovery of open warrants on domestic violence victims often results in their warrants being vacated,” said [NYPD spokesman Paul Browne](#).

Marilyn Chinitz, a lawyer who represents victims of domestic abuse told The Post the directive could further dissuade victims from reporting abusers.

One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, with most cases never reported to the police, according to The Public Policy Office of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. [\[PDF\]](#)

Only approximately one quarter of all physical assaults, one fifth of all rapes, and one half of all stalkings perpetuated against females by intimate partners are reported to the police.

“They would not report a crime because they would fear getting locked up. It would empower the perpetrator, and there’s going to be more domestic violence as a consequence, and you’re endangering children,” Chinitz told the Post.

The Fiscal Policy Institute estimates there are about 535,000 unauthorized immigrants living in New York City and the new directive could impact this group especially hard. Abusers often use their partners’ immigration status as a tool of control, according to a Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy report published in 2000. [\[PDF\]](#) The new NYPD directive could further prevent immigrant women and men from reporting their abusers due to fear of deportation.