

Detroit Free Press

MICHIGAN

She told Michigan cops she was attacked. Now she faces deportation by the feds



Dave Boucher

Detroit Free Press

Published 6:11 a.m. ET March 28, 2025 | Updated 3:13 p.m. ET March 31, 2025

Key Points

While investigating an alleged assault, a local police department tipped ICE to a potential crime victim's immigration status. The deputy chief said it was not intentional.

Last week federal agents arrested the woman, a 4 foot-10, 49-year-old mother of two. They broke her car window before pulling her from her seat. ICE said she failed to comply.

When a co-worker allegedly grabbed her hair, threw her to the ground and hit her in the face, Veronica Ramirez Verduzco did what most people would do: [She went to the police.](#)

But [asking the Van Buren Township Police Department for help](#) likely ensures her [removal from Michigan](#) and the United States.

Federal officers arrested Ramirez Verduzco last week on immigration-related charges. They argue the native of Mexico does not have authorization to be in the U.S., and returned despite previous deportations. Immigration officials did not know she lived in Michigan until February when she went to local police to report the assault allegation, records show.

Lisa Dwyer, Ramirez Verduzco's court appointed lawyer, said during her client's arrest, people in unmarked clothes swarmed her car. They busted her window and dragged the 4-foot-10, 49-year-old mother of two out of her driver's seat, scratching her arm in the process. She has been detained ever since.

"This is just awful," Dwyer said this week after a hearing for Ramirez Verduzco at the federal courthouse in Detroit for the U.S. Eastern District of Michigan.

This is not the first time something like this happened in Michigan. Last week, the Detroit Police Department confirmed an officer working on the case of a woman earlier this year who said she was the victim of a crime informed federal officials about her immigration status.

In Ramirez Verduzco's case, a leader of the Van Buren Township Police Department said they did not intentionally alert federal officials to her status.

But now she is caught up in the increased push from the [Trump administration to ramp up deportations](#). Since Trump's inauguration in late January, federal officials arrested more than 32,000 people accused of living in the U.S. without legal authorization, among other crimes, [according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#).

Local police and advocacy groups agree tipping off federal officials about the immigration status of potential crime victims is a situation that can lead to safety problems in communities down the road.

"Events like this definitely have a chilling effect on communities and individuals in considering: does it make sense for me to report a crime?" said Ruby Robinson, a senior managing attorney with the Michigan Immigrant Rights Clinic.

In a statement, Acting U.S. Attorney Julie Beck committed to deporting anyone they learn might be in the country without authorization.

"Our office encourages all people — including crime victims — to report criminal activity. However, being an alleged victim of a crime does not absolve that person from responsibility for earlier crimes they may have committed themselves," Beck said in a statement.

“That rule applies to citizens and noncitizens alike. The two matters are distinct: reporting a crime is separate from reentering the country illegally.”

ICE did not respond to questions about whether it had any policy on pursuing the deportation of crime victims, or if a potential policy changed under the Trump administration.

Ramirez Verduzco told Dwyer she knew the risk of going to police. But after her co-worker allegedly beat her badly enough to require a visit to the hospital, Dwyer said she felt she had no choice but to seek help.

From alleged assault to arrest

Until recently, Ramirez Verduzco worked at an assisted living facility near Belleville.

On Feb. 14, a police report shows she said she had an altercation at work with a colleague.

After allegedly throwing Ramirez Verduzco to the ground, the woman climbed on top of her and repeatedly hit her on the left side of her head, according to Ramirez Verduzco's statement to police. Co-workers eventually pulled the woman off of her, but Ramirez Verduzco said the woman continued to threaten her.

Dwyer said Ramirez Verduzco's son took her to the hospital. She had bruising and swelling on her face after the reported attack, Dwyer said. The Van Buren Township police report does not provide specific details about the result of the alleged attack, other than, "apparent minor injury."

In the process of taking her information, a Van Buren Township officer asked Ramirez Verduzco for her address. It's a standard request in creating a report, said Van Buren Township Police Deputy Chief Joshua Monte.

The officer did not get her address, Monte said, noting she presented a passport but no documentation with a Michigan address. So, the officer ran Ramirez Verduzco's

name through the Michigan Law Enforcement Information Network.

That system is frequently reserved for tracking down information on people accused of a crime. The search triggered an alert for ICE officials, who contacted a Van Buren Township detective two days after the initial report, records show.

About two weeks after going to police, Ramirez Verduzco withdrew her complaint. A detective went to her work a few days after the initial report; both Ramirez Verduzco and a manager said she no longer wanted to pursue charges.

Dwyer said Ramirez Verduzco told her that her boss made her withdraw her complaint. This week, a man at the facility who told the Free Press he is a manager but declined to confirm his name denied that allegation.

Within two weeks of Van Buren Township police closing their case, federal prosecutors issued a warrant for her arrest.

Later, Ramirez Verduzco sat in her car preparing to drive somewhere, Dwyer said. Before Ramirez Verduzco could move, multiple people prevented her from leaving.

They demanded Ramirez-Verduzco get out of her car, but before she could, Dwyer said the agents shattered her driver's-side window.

In a statement, an ICE spokesman said officers told Ramirez Verduzco they had a warrant and warned they might break her car window.

"She refused to open her door and had only slightly opened the window. The officer broke the driver side front window after she failed to heed officer warnings, at which time she opened the door but still refused to comply. This resisting arrest resulted in her being removed from the vehicle by officers," said the ICE statement, in part.

Officers removed her from the car so quickly it was not placed in park, resulting in it hitting an ICE vehicle, according to ICE.

Frequently, federal officials house people detained on immigration allegations at the Sanilac County Jail. Jail records show Ramirez Verduzco arrived the evening of March 21.

On Wednesday, Ramirez Verduzco appeared before a federal judge in Detroit. She wore an orange jail short-sleeved shirt and pants, with a white long-sleeve shirt underneath. She was handcuffed, her wrists shackled to a belly chain.

Dwyer waived her right to a detention hearing. She's set to appear in federal court again next week.

'We had no idea we were alerting ICE'

Monte acknowledged the department's actions alerted federal officials, but stressed that was not their intent.

"That's I think the fear of a lot of local agencies. We don't want to discourage someone who is a crime victim of reporting crimes," Monte said in a phone interview.

"In this situation, we had no idea we were alerting ICE."

Ramirez Verduzco has a felony on her record for returning to the U.S. years ago following a previous deportation. The federal criminal complaint shows she was removed from the country three times; on two occasions, she attempted to enter through a standard border crossing. In 2000, her first removal, she allegedly presented false identification materials, leading to an expedited removal, according to the recent criminal complaint.

And records show Van Buren Township police gave her two driving tickets in late 2024 from a traffic stop that apparently did not trigger an ICE investigation.

Estimates suggest there are roughly 10 million to 12 million people in the U.S. who lack proper authorization. Many were previously deported; an initial offense of

entering the country without authorization is a misdemeanor. Returning after a deportation without proper documentation is a felony.

Federal court records from Texas show in 2013, Ramirez Verduzco climbed over a border fence near El Paso. A security guard saw her, informed border patrol and she was quickly apprehended, according to records. She tried to enter the country again in 2016 but was turned away at the border, records show.

In the Detroit police case, Director of Media Relations Vic Pratt said the woman who came to the department readily provided her immigration status. Still, the officer did not follow policy and the department took some kind of punitive action, he said.

"Our internal review determined that the officer's actions did not align with departmental policy. The officer has received corrective feedback," Pratt said in an emailed statement; [Outlier first reported on this case](#).

"DPD has a clear policy that our officers do not enforce federal laws, including federal immigration laws. Our officers also are not to question residents about their immigration status."

Pratt could not immediately say whether other officers also reported potential crime victims to federal immigration officials this year. It's unclear if the woman in this case faces deportation proceedings.

'There is an emboldening'

Robinson, the immigration lawyer, said while these cases occasionally cropped up before, in general, Michigan police alerting ICE to the immigration status of a potential crime victim was "abnormal."

Now that's changing though: He thinks these cases are evidence of the Trump-inspired crackdown. These tactics make it harder for police and immigrant

communities to keep everyone safe. He expects it could happen more though, given the rhetoric from Washington, D.C.

“I think there is an emboldening or an enabling occurring in certain law enforcement communities around the country where this type of activity previously may have been frowned upon or may not have occurred. Now it’s being normalized. That is very worrisome,” Robinson said.

Recently, Beck and other federal officials championed prosecutors' robust pursuit of those in the state without legal status.

“Keeping dangerous people and illicit drugs and weapons from infecting our communities is at the core of our comprehensive border security mandate,” said Detroit Director of Field Operations Marty Raybon, in a news release.

Some of the people recently detained in metro Detroit and set for deportation have previous convictions for crimes related to drugs, guns or other violent felonies. Others have been deported many times before.

But that’s not every case. Just recently, federal agents detained a father while he [dropped off his child at a middle school in Trenton](#). The man’s family says he has lived in the U.S. for decades and has legal authorization. Federal officers disagree, suggesting he was ordered back to Mexico in 2014.

Robinson has questions about Ramirez Verduzco's interaction with Van Buren Township police. He said as a white man, he suspects if he came to report a crime that officers would treat him differently.

“If I went to the police department to report a crime, my information would probably not be run through the same database,” he said, noting language issues may have also been a barrier for police.

“I worry when that is the default. That is going to have severe effects on community safety. The focus of local law enforcement is to keep local communities safe.”

Monte said the department is reviewing its procedures, noting there are “a lot of stakeholders involved.”

As Monte said, for years, some law enforcement agencies noted the perils of local officers tackling federal enforcement.

“In communities where people fear the police, very little information is shared with officers, undermining the police capacity for crime control and quality service delivery. As a result, these areas become breeding grounds for drug trafficking, human smuggling, terrorist activity, and other serious crimes,” wrote Hubert Williams, former president of the Police Foundation, [in a 2009 paper](#) examining local law enforcement grappling with immigration laws.

Earlier this year, many local law enforcement agencies around Detroit and across the state said they are prepared to assist federal officials on immigration cases. But [they lamented the lack of time and resources](#) needed to conduct such work on their own.

Throughout the 2024 presidential campaign, Trump promised to create the largest deportation effort in U.S. history. Since winning the election, he and his allies argue they are focused on criminals. Yet immigration advocacy groups across the country note anyone in the U.S. could lose their status, pointing to efforts to revoke temporary protected status for Haitians and Ukrainians who fled their own countries amid war.

That means living in the U.S. as an immigrant — especially one without citizenship — requires risk evaluation. Robinson said he tries to help his clients understand this every day: sure, they might get pulled over while driving, but if they are headed to a crucial doctor's appointment, that could be worth the risk.

Local police helping deport people who report crimes changes a person's risk assessment, Robinson said.

"We are still encouraging people to call local police, to call 911 when they need assistance. And know: We are living in a different climate today than we were eight weeks ago," Robinson said.

Reach Dave Boucher at dboucher@freepress.com and on X @Dave_Boucher1.