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5 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
6 **EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**  
7

8 **LYLE S. McFARLAND,**

9 **Plaintiff**

10 **v.**

11 **CITY OF CLOVIS, CITY OF CLOVIS**  
12 **POLICE DEPARTMENT, JACOB RIOS,**  
13 **and DOES 1-20,**

14 **Defendants**

**CASE NO. 1:15-CV-1530 AWI SMS**

**ORDER ON DEFENDANTS' MOTION  
TO DISMISS**

**(Doc. No. 15)**

15  
16 This case arises from an encounter between Plaintiff Lyle McFarland (“McFarland”) and  
17 Defendant Officer Jacob Rios (“Rios”) of the City of Clovis Police Department (“Clovis P.D.”).  
18 In the First Amended Complaint (“FAC”), McFarland brings claims under California law and 42  
19 U.S.C. § 1983 for violations of his Fourth Amendment rights by Rios and an unknown Clovis P.D.  
20 officer. The City of Clovis (“the City”) and the Clovis P.D. now move under Rule 12(b)(6) to  
21 dismiss the Fourth Cause of Action for violation of California Civil Code § 52.1 and the *Monell*  
22 claims in the First, Second, and Third Causes of Action. For the reasons that follow, the motion  
23 will be granted in part and denied in part.  
24

25 **RULE 12(b)(6) FRAMEWORK**

26 Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), a claim may be dismissed because of the  
27 plaintiff’s “failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6). A  
28 dismissal under Rule 12(b)(6) may be based on the lack of a cognizable legal theory or on the

1 absence of sufficient facts alleged under a cognizable legal theory. Conservation Force v. Salazar,  
2 646 F.3d 1240, 1242 (9th Cir. 2011); Johnson v. Riverside Healthcare Sys., 534 F.3d 1116, 1121  
3 (9th Cir. 2008). In reviewing a complaint under Rule 12(b)(6), all allegations of material fact are  
4 taken as true and construed in the light most favorable to the non-moving party. Faulkner v. ADT  
5 Sec. Servs., 706 F.3d 1017, 1019 (9th Cir. 2013); Johnson, 534 F.3d at 1121. However,  
6 complaints that offer no more than “labels and conclusions” or “a formulaic recitation of the  
7 elements of action will not do.” Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009); Dichter-Mad Family  
8 Partners. LLP v. United States, 709 F.3d 749, 761 (9th Cir. 2013). The Court is not required “to  
9 accept as true allegations that are merely conclusory, unwarranted deductions of fact, or  
10 unreasonable inferences.” Wilson v. Hewlett-Packard Co., 668 F.3d 1136, 1145 n. 4 (9th Cir.  
11 2012); Sprewell v. Golden State Warriors, 266 F.3d 979, 988 (9th Cir. 2001). To avoid a Rule  
12 12(b)(6) dismissal, “a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a  
13 claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Iqbal, 556 U.S. at 678; Faulkner, 706 F.3d at 1019.  
14 “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court draw  
15 the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” Iqbal, 556 U.S.  
16 at 678; Dichter-Mad, 709 F.3d at 761. “Plausibility” means “more than a sheer possibility,” but  
17 less than a probability, and facts that are “merely consistent” with liability fall short of  
18 “plausibility.” Iqbal, 556 U.S. at 678; Li v. Kerry, 710 F.3d 995, 999 (9th Cir. 2013). The Ninth  
19 Circuit has distilled the following principles from *Iqbal* and *Twombly*: (1) to be entitled to the  
20 presumption of truth, allegations in a complaint or counterclaim may not simply recite the  
21 elements of a cause of action, but must contain sufficient allegations of underlying facts to give  
22 fair notice and to enable the opposing party to defend itself effectively; (2) the factual allegations  
23 that are taken as true must plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief, such that it is not unfair to  
24 require the opposing party to be subjected to the expense of discovery and continued litigation.  
25 Starr v. Baca, 652 F.3d 1202, 1216 (9th Cir. 2011). In assessing a motion to dismiss, courts may  
26 consider documents attached to the complaint, documents incorporated by reference in the  
27 complaint, or matters of judicial notice. Dichter-Mad, 709 F.3d at 762. If a motion to dismiss is  
28 granted, “[the] district court should grant leave to amend even if no request to amend the pleading

1 was made . . . .” Henry A. v. Willden, 678 F.3d 991, 1005 (9th Cir. 2012). However, leave to  
2 amend need not be granted if amendment would be futile or if the plaintiff has failed to cure  
3 deficiencies despite repeated opportunities. See Mueller v. Aulker, 700 F.3d 1180, 1191 (9th Cir.  
4 2012); Telesaurus VPC, LLC v. Power, 623 F.3d 998, 1003 (9th Cir. 2010).

### 5 6 **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

7 From the FAC, just before 3:30 p.m. on January 25, 2015, Rios and another tall Clovis  
8 P.D. officer loudly knocked on McFarland’s front door. When McFarland answered the door, the  
9 officers asked about McFarland’s cell phone and shotgun. The “tall officer” asked if they could  
10 come into McFarland’s home, and McFarland asked what this was about. The officers then told  
11 McFarland to step out of his house. McFarland complied with the officers’ request. When he  
12 stepped outside, the tall officer grabbed and twisted McFarland’s right arm behind McFarland’s  
13 back, and Rios grabbed McFarland’s left arm. The officers then handcuffed McFarland.  
14 McFarland, who is 59 years old and disabled due to a serious injury to his right arm, told the  
15 officers that he is disabled, repeated to the officers six times that the handcuffs were hurting him,  
16 and repeatedly requested that the handcuffs be removed. The officers were unresponsive.

17 McFarland was arrested for violation of California Penal Code § 422 (criminal threat)  
18 based on a text message that he sent to his brother at 3:00 a.m. that morning. The text included a  
19 picture of ammunition and the letters “F-U.”

20 While being taken to the police station, McFarland repeatedly informed the officers that he  
21 was disabled, that the handcuffs were hurting him, and that the handcuffs should be removed. The  
22 officers ignored McFarland’s statements.

23 At approximately 7:30 p.m., McFarland was booked into jail. Pursuant to a search  
24 warrant, Clovis P.D. took possession of McFarland’s shotgun, shells, and other possessions.  
25 Although McFarland had no previous criminal violations, bail was set at \$20,000.00. McFarland  
26 spent 4 hours in the Clovis P.D. jail, and another 2 days and 2 nights in the Fresno County jail.  
27 McFarland was eventually released from jail on January 27, 2015, at 10:30 p.m., without any  
28 charges being filed.

1 **I. DEFENDANTS' MOTION**

2 **A. First, Second, & Third Causes of Action – Monell Liability**

3 Defendants' Argument

4 The City argues that McFarland's allegations regarding policies or customs are conclusory.  
5 There are no allegations that identify an official policy, or explain how the policy is deficient, or  
6 how the policy caused harm, or show that the policy amounts to deliberate indifference. The same  
7 is also true with respect to allegations of improper training. Because the allegations are  
8 conclusory, there are no plausible claims alleged.

9 Plaintiff's Opposition

10 McFarland argues that the FAC expressly alleges that the officers acted pursuant to their  
11 training and Clovis P.D. policy when they violently seized and arrested him, ignored his disability  
12 and complaints about the handcuffs, and held him for 56 hours in prison before releasing him  
13 without charge. The FAC alleges that the officers' training did not adequately deal with probable  
14 cause in making an arrest, or in seizing, arresting, handcuffing, and detaining disabled individuals.  
15 The involvement of two arresting officers provides support that the officers acted pursuant to a  
16 Clovis P.D. policy. These allegations make dismissal improper.

17 Legal Standard

18 Municipalities are considered "persons" under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and therefore may be  
19 liable for causing a constitutional deprivation. Monell v. Department of Soc. Servs., 436 U.S. 658,  
20 690 (1978); Castro v. County of L.A., 797 F.3d 654, 670 (9th Cir. 2015). A municipality,  
21 however, "cannot be held liable solely because it employs a tortfeasor – or, in other words, a  
22 municipality cannot be held liable under [42 U.S.C. § 1983] under a *respondeat superior* theory."  
23 Monell, 436 U.S. at 691; see Castro, 797 F.3d at 670. Liability only attaches where the  
24 municipality itself causes the constitutional violation through "execution of a government's policy  
25 or custom, whether made by its lawmakers or by those whose edicts or acts may fairly be said to  
26 represent official policy." Monell, 436 U.S. at 694; Price v. Sery, 513 F.3d 962, 966 (9th Cir. Or.  
27 2008). Municipal liability may be premised on: (1) conduct pursuant to a formal or expressly  
28 adopted official policy; (2) a longstanding practice or custom which constitutes the "standard

1 operating procedure” of the local government entity; (3) a decision of a decision-making official  
2 who was, as a matter of state law, a final policymaking authority whose edicts or acts may fairly  
3 be said to represent official policy in the area of decision; or (4) an official with final  
4 policymaking authority either delegating that authority to, or ratifying the decision of, a  
5 subordinate. See Thomas v. County of Riverside, 763 F.3d 1167, 1170 (9th Cir. 2014); Price, 513  
6 F.3d at 966. A failure to train or inadequate training may form the basis for municipal liability  
7 under § 1983 where the training or failure to train amounts to deliberate indifference to the rights  
8 of the persons with whom the municipality’s employees come into contact. Flores v. County of  
9 L.A., 758 F.3d 1154, 1158 (9th Cir. 2014); Long v. County of L.A., 442 F.3d 1178, 1186 (9th Cir.  
10 2006). Under such a theory, the “issue is whether the training program is adequate and, if it is not,  
11 whether such inadequate training can justifiably be said to represent municipal policy.” Long, 442  
12 F.3d at 1186. A municipality is deliberately indifferent when the need for more or different action  
13 is “so obvious, and the inadequacy [of the current procedure] so likely to result in the violation of  
14 constitutional rights, that the policymakers . . . can reasonably be said to have been deliberately  
15 indifferent to the need.” City of Canton v. Harris, 489 U.S. 378, 390 (1989); Mortimer v. Baca,  
16 594 F.3d 714, 723 (9th Cir. 2010). Allegations of *Monell* liability will be sufficient for purposes  
17 of Rule 12(b)(6) where they: (1) identify the challenged policy/custom; (2) explain how the  
18 policy/custom is deficient; (3) explain how the policy/custom caused the plaintiff harm; and (4)  
19 reflect how the policy/custom amounted to deliberate indifference, i.e. show how the deficiency  
20 involved was obvious and the constitutional injury was likely to occur. Young v. City of Visalia,  
21 687 F. Supp. 2d 1141, 1149-50 (E.D. Cal. 2009).

## 22 Discussion

### 23 1. First Cause of Action – Fourth Amendment – Arrest Without Probable Cause

24 The FAC in general alleges that the officers acted pursuant to the training provided by the  
25 Clovis P.D. and pursuant to Clovis P.D. policy. See FAC ¶¶ 17, 18. More specifically, in relevant  
26 part the FAC alleges: “. . . the training that the arresting officers . . . received from Defendant  
27 Clovis P.D. did not adequately train the arresting officers . . . in the required probable cause  
28 necessary for making an arrest.” Id. at ¶ 19.

1 The Court does not find that these allegations sufficiently state a plausible *Monell* claim.  
2 The Court can glean that McFarland is attempting to allege that there is a training deficiency with  
3 respect to probable cause. However, the FAC does not explain how the training with respect to  
4 probable cause was deficient or inadequate. See Young, 687 F.Supp.2d at 1149. There are any  
5 number of ways that training may be deficient, e.g. use of an improper definition of probable  
6 cause or no training whatsoever regarding probable cause to arrest. Simply alleging that training  
7 is “deficient” or “inadequate” is conclusory and does not support a plausible claim. Additionally,  
8 there are no allegations that explain how the deficient training caused McFarland’s injury. See id.  
9 Without identifying how training is deficient and how the training caused injury, it cannot be  
10 determined whether the City acted with deliberate indifference. See id. at 1150.

11 To the extent that McFarland is relying on this particular incident to show inadequate  
12 training, his reliance is misplaced. The Supreme Court has recognized that the fact that “a  
13 particular officer may be unsatisfactorily trained will not alone suffice to fasten liability on the  
14 city,” and “plainly, adequately trained officers occasionally make mistakes; the fact that they do  
15 says little about the training program or the legal basis for holding the city liable.” City of Canton,  
16 489 U.S. at 391; Merritt v. County of Los Angeles, 875 F.2d 765, 770 (9th Cir. 1989). Therefore,  
17 that Rios and the “tall officer” may have arrested McFarland without probable cause alone does  
18 not show inadequate training. See id.

19 Because there is no plausible *Monell* claim alleged with respect to the First Cause of  
20 Action, dismissal is appropriate.

21 2. Second Cause of Action – Fourth Amendment – False Imprisonment

22 The FAC in general alleges that the officers acted pursuant to the training provided by the  
23 Clovis P.D. and pursuant to Clovis P.D. policy. See FAC ¶¶ 17, 18. More specifically, in relevant  
24 part the FAC alleges that: “. . . [McFarland] was wrongfully detained, pursuant to policy of [the  
25 City and Clovis P.D.], when he was immediately detained after being booked, without proper  
26 opportunity to post bail.” Id. at ¶ 13. The FAC also cites two cases and gives parenthetical  
27 descriptions for each. First, *Alkire v. Irving*, 330 F.3d 802, 815 (6th Cir. 2003) is cited and  
28 described as holding that a “policy of detaining persons who could not post immediate bail until

1 their initial appearance ran afoul of 48 hour time limit.” Id. Second, *Sivard v. Pulaski Cnty.*, 959  
2 F.2d 662 (7th Cir. 1992) is cited and described as holding that “general allegations that plaintiff  
3 was wrongfully detained pursuant to county policy and custom held sufficient to defeat summary  
4 judgment; court notes that inexplicable nature of plaintiff’s detention created inference that some  
5 official policy was responsible for detention.” Id. The Court is not clear about what McFarland is  
6 attempting to allege.

7 *Alkire* is a case that deals with policies that led to violation of the 48-hour rule of *County of*  
8 *Riverside v. McLoughlin*, 500 U.S. 44 (1991). See Alkire, 330 F.3d at 813-15. The Fourth  
9 Amendment “requires a prompt judicial determination of probable cause following an arrest made  
10 without a warrant and ensuing detention.” Powell v. Nevada, 511 U.S. 79, 80 (1994); Anderson  
11 v. Calderon, 232 F.3d 1053, 1069 (9th Cir. 2000)<sup>1</sup>; Hallstrom v. Garden City, 991 F.2d 1473, 1478  
12 (9th Cir. 1993). A “prompt judicial determination of probable cause” generally means  
13 presentation before a magistrate within 48 hours of the warrantless arrest. Powell, 511 U.S. at 80  
14 (citing McLoughlin, 500 U.S. at 56); Anderson, 232 F.3d at 1069; Hallstrom, 991 F.2d at 1479.  
15 Judicial determinations of probable cause to arrest that are made within 48 hours of arrest are  
16 presumptively reasonable, i.e. do not violate the Fourth Amendment; judicial determinations of  
17 probable cause to arrest that are made more than 48 hours after arrest are presumptively  
18 unreasonable, i.e. do violate the Fourth Amendment. See McLoughlin, 500 U.S. at 56-57;  
19 Anderson, 232 U.S. at 1069; Hallstrom, 991 F.2d at 1479.

20 The FAC’s allegation that McFarland was released after 56 hours of confinement, and  
21 citation to *Alkire*, may indicate that McFarland was not taken to a magistrate for a judicial  
22 determination of probable cause within 48 hours. If that is what McFarland is attempting to  
23 allege, then a constitutional violation would be identified. See Hallstrom, 991 F.2d at 1479, 1482.  
24 However, the FAC fails to expressly allege that a judicial determination was not made within 48  
25 hours, the FAC simply alleges a release time. It is possible to be released after a judicial  
26 determination of probable cause is made, but without charges being brought. Without an express  
27 factual allegation that McFarland was not taken for a judicial determination of probable cause  
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<sup>1</sup> Overruled on other grounds by Osband v. Woodford, 290 F.3d 1036 (9th Cir. 2002).

1 within 48-hours, the FAC does not plausibly state a constitutional violation. Also, assuming a  
2 violation of *McLoughlin*'s 48-hour rule, merely identifying a constitutional violation is not enough  
3 for municipal liability. The FAC indicates conduct pursuant to policy, but there is no policy that is  
4 actually identified. McFarland needs to make factual allegations that identify the specific policy at  
5 issue, explain how the policy is deficient, explain how the policy caused him harm, and reflect  
6 how the policy amounted to deliberate indifference. Young, 687 F.Supp.2d at 1149-50.

7 As for *Sivard*, that case involved an individual who was arrested without a warrant and not  
8 given a judicial determination of probable cause for 17 days. See Sivard, 959 F.2d at 666. The  
9 Seventh Circuit found that the 17 day delay, combined with a general allegation that conduct was  
10 done in accordance with policy and custom, were sufficient to show the existence of a policy. See  
11 id. The Court does not find that *Sivard* aids McFarland. The Court will accept that other facts and  
12 circumstances may help support the existence of a policy, such as a 17 day delay before a judicial  
13 determination of probable cause is made. However, assuming that McFarland was never taken  
14 before a magistrate, his detention was 56 hours or 2 1/3 days. That time period is a far cry from  
15 17 days. Missing the presumptively reasonable 48-hour window by 8 *hours* is nowhere near  
16 missing the window by 15 *days*. The Court cannot find that the mere fact of a 56-hour detention  
17 supports the existence of a policy.

18 The FAC also indicates that McFarland was not given a "proper opportunity" to post bail,  
19 and also suggests that the \$20,000 bail may have been excessive. There are several problems with  
20 these allegations. First, as to both the opportunity to make bail and the amount of bail, the FAC  
21 does not make any factual allegations that identify a specific policy, a deficiency in the policy,  
22 causation, and deliberate indifference. See Young, 687 F.Supp.2d at 1149-50. Second, as to a  
23 "proper opportunity" to make bail, it is unknown what this allegation means. While an individual  
24 has the right to be free from excessive bail, see U.S. Const. amend. VIII, the Court is unaware of a  
25 constitutional right to have a "proper opportunity" to make bail or what a "proper opportunity"  
26 would even look like. Without more from McFarland, the allegation that he was not given a  
27 "proper opportunity" to make bail does not allege a constitutional violation. Third, as to the  
28 amount of bail, there are no allegations that any Defendant was involved in setting bail. It is the



1 Court’s understanding that the Fresno County Superior Court sets the amount of bail pursuant to a  
2 standing order. The Fresno County Superior Court Bail Schedule sets bail for a felony violation of  
3 Penal Code § 422 (which was the offense for which McFarland was arrested, see FAC ¶ 24 & Ex.  
4 1) at \$20,000.00, and that is the amount of bail that was imposed on McFarland. See Fresno  
5 County Superior Court 2016 Criminal Bail Schedule.<sup>2</sup> In and of itself, following the bail schedule  
6 of the Fresno County Superior Court does not appear improper.

7 Finally, McFarland’s opposition cites and relies on *Bordanaro v. McLeod*, 871 F.2d 1151  
8 (1st Cir. 1989). McFarland’s describes *Bordanaro* as observing that “officers who were jointly  
9 involved in constitutional violations . . . provided evidentiary support of the existence of a  
10 municipal policy or custom which caused the constitutional violation, which can be inferred from  
11 the event itself.” McFarland then points out that this incident involved two police officers, and  
12 thus, indicates conduct pursuant to a policy. The Court is not convinced.

13 The policy or custom at issue in *Bordanaro* was a practice of breaking down doors while  
14 making felony arrests. See *Bordanaro*, 871 F.2d at 1156. In addition to other evidence that  
15 indicated an unconstitutional policy or custom, the First Circuit found significance in the fact that  
16 “the entire night watch” of the police department was involved in the entry at issue. See *id.* The  
17 First Circuit then held, “[w]hile it is true that evidence of a single event alone cannot establish a  
18 municipal custom or policy, where other evidence of the policy has been presented and the ‘single  
19 incident’ in question involves the concerted action of a *large contingent of individual municipal*  
20 *employees*, the event itself provides some proof of the existence of the underlying policy or  
21 custom.” *Id.* at 1156-57 (emphasis added). Here, the FAC has not identified any “large  
22 contingent of municipal employees” who violated McFarland’s rights. Instead, the FAC identifies  
23 essentially only two actors – Rios and the “tall officer.” A named officer and his partner is not a  
24 “large contingent.” Accordingly, *Bordanaro* does not apply in this case.

25 In light of the above, there is no plausible *Monell* claim alleged under the Second Cause of  
26 Action, and dismissal is appropriate. See *Young*, 687 F.Supp.2d at 1149-50.

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27 <sup>2</sup> The Fresno County Bail Schedule can be found at the following website:  
28 [http://www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/\\_pdfs/Bail%20Schedule/Fresno%20County%20Criminal%20Bail%20Schedule%202016.htm](http://www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/_pdfs/Bail%20Schedule/Fresno%20County%20Criminal%20Bail%20Schedule%202016.htm) (visited February 2016).

1           **3. Third Cause of Action – Fourth Amendment – Excessive Force**

2           The FAC in general alleges that the officers acted pursuant to the training provided by the  
3 Clovis P.D. and pursuant to Clovis P.D. policy. See FAC ¶¶ 17, 18. More specifically, in relevant  
4 part the FAC alleges that: “. . . the training that the arresting officers . . . received from Defendant  
5 Clovis P.D. did not adequately train the arresting officers . . . in the seizure, arrest, handcuffing,  
6 and detention of disabled individuals.” Id. at ¶ 20.

7           For the reasons explained under the First Cause of Action, the Court does not find that  
8 these allegations sufficiently state a plausible *Monell* claim. First, although McFarland is  
9 attempting to allege that there is a training deficiency with respect to the arrest of disabled  
10 individuals, the FAC does not explain how the training is actually deficient or inadequate. See  
11 Young, 687 F.Supp.2d at 1149. Alleging that training is “deficient” or “inadequate” without  
12 identifying a specific inadequacy is conclusory and does not support a plausible claim. See id.  
13 Further, the facts of this particular incident alone do not demonstrate inadequate training. City of  
14 Canton, 489 U.S. at 391; Merritt, 875 F.2d at 770. Second, there are no allegations that explain  
15 how the deficient training caused McFarland’s injury. See Young, 687 F.Supp.2d at 1149. Third,  
16 in the absence of allegations that identify how training is deficient and how the training caused  
17 injury, it cannot be determined whether the City acted with deliberate indifference. See id. at  
18 1150. Therefore, there is no plausible *Monell* claim with respect to the Third Cause of Action, and  
19 dismissal is appropriate.

20           **B. Fourth Cause of Action – California Civil Code § 52.1**

21           *Defendants’ Argument*

22           Defendants argue that the FAC does not even make conclusory allegations that any  
23 defendant interfered with McFarland’s constitutional rights through threats, intimidation, or  
24 coercion. There is only an allegation that defendants interfered with McFarland’s rights by  
25 violently seizing and handcuffing him. There are no facts alleged, and the allegations do not  
26 reflect a plausible § 52.1 claim.

27           *Plaintiff’s Opposition*

28           McFarland argues that the FAC alleges that the defendant officers violently seized,

1 arrested, and handcuffed him. McFarland was incarcerated for approximately 56 hours before he  
2 was released from without being charged with a crime. The officers were acting pursuant to a  
3 policy of the Clovis P.D., and they were inadequately trained regarding probable cause and the  
4 seizure and arrest of handicapped individuals. McFarland argues that these allegations are  
5 sufficient to state a claim under Rule 12(b)(6).

### 6 Legal Standard

7 California Civil Code § 52.1 provides a cause of action for violations of constitutional and  
8 statutory rights. Rivera v. County of L. A., 745 F.3d 384, 393 (9th Cir. 2014). The essence of a §  
9 52.1 claim is that “the defendant, by the specified improper means (i.e., “threats, intimidation or  
10 coercion”), tried to or did prevent the plaintiff from doing something he or she had the right to do  
11 under the law or to force the plaintiff to do something that he or she was not required to do under  
12 the law.” Jones v. Kmart Corp., 17 Cal.4th 329, 334 (1998); Shoyoye v. County of L. A., 203  
13 Cal.App.4th 947, 955-56 (2012). Therefore, there are two distinct elements for a § 52.1 claim: (1)  
14 intentional interference or attempted interference with a state or federal constitutional or legal  
15 right, and (2) the interference or attempted interference was by threats, intimidation or coercion.  
16 Allen v. City of Sacramento, 234 Cal.App.4th 41, 67 (2015). In a search-and-seizure case, the  
17 plaintiff “must allege threats or coercion beyond the coercion inherent in a detention or search in  
18 order to recover under [§ 52.1].” Lyll v. City of L. A., 807 F.3d 1178, 1196 (9th Cir. 2015); see  
19 also Allen, 234 Cal.App.4th at 69; Shoyoye, 203 Cal.App.4th at 960. Where an arrest is “unlawful  
20 and excessive force is applied in making the arrest, there has been coercion ‘independent from the  
21 coercion inherent in the wrongful detention itself.’” Bender v. Count of L.A., 217 Cal.App.4t h  
22 968, 978 (2013).

### 23 Discussion

24 Under the Fourth Cause of Action, the FAC alleges in part that the defendant officers  
25 violated the Fourth Amendment when they “violently seized and handcuffed Plaintiff McFarland,  
26 arrested [him] on January 25, 2015, and falsely imprisoned [him] for approximately 56 hours.”  
27 FAC ¶ 40. Although detention, handcuffing, and transporting are coercive actions, they are  
28 actions that are an inherent part of any arrest. Ruiz v. Flores, 2015 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 27209, \*31

1 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 4, 2015). As such, the mere fact of detention, handcuffing, and transportation  
2 cannot from the basis of a § 52.1 claim. See Lyall, 807 F.3d at 1196; Ruiz, 2015 U.S. Dist.  
3 LEXIS 27209 at \*31; Allen, 234 Cal.App.4th at 69; Shoyoye, 203 Cal.App.4th at 960.

4 The allegation that the officers “violently” did these acts does not save the claim because  
5 there is no description of how the officers’ conduct was “violent.” However, the Fourth Cause of  
6 Action incorporates all prior allegations by reference. The most relevant incorporated allegation  
7 appears to be Paragraph 9. That paragraph in part describes the “tall officer” grabbing hold of  
8 McFarland’s right arm and twisting the right arm behind McFarland’s back, while Rios grabbed  
9 McFarland’s left arm. See FAC ¶ 9. The officers then handcuffed McFarland. See id. Even  
10 viewing Paragraph 9 in the light most favorable to McFarland, see Faulkner, 706 F.3d at 1019,  
11 there is no “violent” conduct. A person can be handcuffed with his hands either in front or behind  
12 him. E.g. Franklin v. Foxworth, 31 F.3d 873, 875 (9th Cir. 1994) (noting that an individual was  
13 initially handcuffed with his hands behind his back, but the handcuffs were later moved so that his  
14 hands were in front); Ladd v. County of San Mateo, 12 Cal.4th 913, 916 (1996) (suspect was  
15 handcuffed with his hands in front of him); Nelson v. County of L.A., 113 Cal.App.4th 783, 787  
16 (2002) (individual was handcuffed with hands behind his back). All that is fairly described in  
17 Paragraph 9 is the officers touching McFarland and maneuvering his arms in place for  
18 handcuffing. See Bender, 217 Cal.App.4th at 972-73 (“... Deputy Sorrow took [Bender’s]  
19 hands, pulled them behind his back, and handcuffed him, saying [Bender] was under arrest . . .  
20 .”).<sup>3</sup> Some amount of force or touch is necessary in order for a person to be handcuffed, and there  
21 are no factual allegations that indicate the officers “violently” touched McFarland or used  
22 excessive force while in the process of handcuffing him. For example, there are no allegations  
23 that the officers struck McFarland or placed McFarland in a control/pain-compliance hold. Merely  
24 using the adverb “violently” alone does not demonstrate coercion beyond what is inherent in any  
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26 <sup>3</sup> Deputy Sorrow and another deputy later used excessive force against Bender (using pepper spray and physical  
27 blows) after he was handcuffed and led towards a patrol car. See Bender, 217 Cal.App.4th at 973, 978. There is no  
28 indication that Deputy Sorrow’s actions in placing the handcuffs on Bender constituted either excessive force or  
coercion beyond what is inherent in being arrested. See id. at 978 (“... [§ 52.1] applies because there was a Fourth  
Amendment violation – an arrest without probable cause – accompanied by the beating and pepper spraying of an  
unresisting plaintiff, i.e. coercion that is in no way inherent in an arrest . . .”).

1 detention, handcuffing, or arrest. See Allen, 234 Cal.App.4th at 639.

2 Nevertheless, aside from “violent” conduct alleged in Paragraph 9, there are allegations in  
3 Paragraphs 9, 11, and 34 that McFarland told the officers both prior to transport and during  
4 transport that he was disabled, the handcuffs were hurting him, and that the handcuffs should be  
5 removed. See FAC ¶¶ 9, 11, 34. The Court finds that the FAC can be reasonably read as alleging  
6 that the handcuffs were too tight and caused McFarland pain, yet the officers did nothing to loosen  
7 or check the handcuffs. The Ninth Circuit has recognized that tight handcuffs can amount to  
8 excessive force. Wall v. County of Orange, 364 F.3d 1107, 1112 (9th Cir. 2004); LaLonde v.  
9 County of Riverside, 204 F.3d 947, 960 (9th Cir. 2000). Therefore, the allegations regarding  
10 painful handcuffing, i.e. tight handcuffing, indicate excessive force was used during the arrest and  
11 transport of McFarland. See id.

12 When combined with the claims for arrest without probable cause, see FAC ¶ 25, the FAC  
13 can be viewed as alleging an arrest without probable cause that was accompanied by excessive  
14 force, i.e. tight handcuffs. Under *Bender*, the tight handcuffing represents “coercion independent  
15 from the coercion inherent in the wrongful detention itself,” and is a viable basis for a § 52.1  
16 claim. Bender, 217 Cal.App.4th at 978. As McFarland has alleged a viable § 52.1 claim through  
17 the absence of probable cause to arrest and tight handcuffs, dismissal is not appropriate. Id.

## 18 19 **II. Official Capacity, the City, & Clovis P.D.**

20 A suit against an individual police officer in his official capacity is really a suit against the  
21 municipal entity that employs the officer. See Kentucky v. Graham, 473 U.S. 159, 165-67 (1985);  
22 Community House, Inc. v. City of Boise, 623 F.3d 945, 966-67 (9th Cir. 2010). Also, police  
23 departments are sub-units/departments of a municipal entity; they generally are not considered  
24 proper defendants in a § 1983 suit. See Nelson v. County of Sacramento, 926 F.Supp.2d 1159,  
25 1165 (E.D. Cal. 2013); Gonzales v. City of Clovis, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 12719, \*39-\*40 (E.D.  
26 Cal. Jan. 29, 2013); Nichols v. Brown, 859 F.Supp.2d 1118, 1136-37 (C.D. Cal. 2012); Vance v.  
27 County of Santa Clara, 928 F.Supp. 993, 996 (C.D. Cal. 1996).

28 Here, McFarland has brought suit against the City, the Clovis P.D., and Rios in his official

1 capacity as a City police officer. These are clearly attempts to allege municipal liability against  
2 the City. Because the City is a named defendant, naming the Clovis PD and Rios in an official  
3 capacity is redundant. See Vance, 928 F.Supp. at 996. Therefore, the Court will dismiss without  
4 leave to amend the Clovis P.D. and Rios in his official capacity.<sup>4</sup> See id.

5  
6 **ORDER**

7 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:

- 8 1. Defendants' motion to dismiss the *Monell* claims in the first, second, and third causes of  
9 action is GRANTED and those claims are DISMISSED with leave to amend;
- 10 2. Defendants' motion to dismiss the Fourth Cause of Action is DENIED with respect to  
11 claims based on tight handcuffing;
- 12 3. Defendants' motion to dismiss the Fourth Cause of Action is otherwise GRANTED and  
13 claims based on conduct other than tight handcuffing are DISMISSED with leave to  
14 amend;
- 15 3. Defendants Clovis Police Department and Jacob Rios in his official capacity are  
16 DISMISSED without leave to amend;
- 17 4. Plaintiff may file an amended complaint that addresses the deficiencies identified in this  
18 order within fourteen (14) days of service of this order; and
- 19 5. If Plaintiff does not file an amended complaint, Defendants shall file an answer within  
20 twenty-one (21) days of service of this order.

21 IT IS SO ORDERED.

22 Dated: February 16, 2016

23   
24 \_\_\_\_\_  
25 SENIOR DISTRICT JUDGE

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27  
28 <sup>4</sup> The claims against the City and the claims against Rios in his *individual capacity* are unaffected by the dismissal of the Clovis P.D. and Rios in his *official capacity*. See Community House, 623 F.3d at 966-67.