

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

DANNY SAETERN,

Plaintiff,

v.

CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL
HEALTH CARE SERVICES, et al.,

Defendants.

No. 2:16-cv-1646-MCE-EFB P

ORDER GRANTING IFP AND
RECOMMENDATION OF DISMISSAL
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. § 1915A

Plaintiff is a state prisoner proceeding without counsel in an action brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He has filed an application for leave to proceed in forma pauperis.

I. Request to Proceed In Forma Pauperis

Plaintiff’s application makes the showing required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1) and (2). Accordingly, by separate order, the court directs the agency having custody of plaintiff to collect and forward the appropriate monthly payments for the filing fee as set forth in 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1) and (2).

II. Screening Requirement and Standards

Federal courts must engage in a preliminary screening of cases in which prisoners seek redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must identify cognizable claims or dismiss the complaint, or any portion of the complaint, if the complaint “is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which

1 relief may be granted,” or “seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such
2 relief.” *Id.* § 1915A(b).

3 A pro se plaintiff, like other litigants, must satisfy the pleading requirements of Rule 8(a)
4 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Rule 8(a)(2) “requires a complaint to include a short and
5 plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief, in order to give the
6 defendant fair notice of what the claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v.*
7 *Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 554, 562-563 (2007) (citing *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41 (1957)).

8 While the complaint must comply with the “short and plain statement” requirements of Rule 8,
9 its allegations must also include the specificity required by *Twombly* and *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556
10 U.S. 662, 679 (2009).

11 To avoid dismissal for failure to state a claim a complaint must contain more than “naked
12 assertions,” “labels and conclusions” or “a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of
13 action.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555-557. In other words, “[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of
14 a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements do not suffice.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at
15 678.

16 Furthermore, a claim upon which the court can grant relief must have facial plausibility.
17 *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570. “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual
18 content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the
19 misconduct alleged.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678. When considering whether a complaint states a
20 claim upon which relief can be granted, the court must accept the allegations as true, *Erickson v.*
21 *Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89 (2007), and construe the complaint in the light most favorable to the
22 plaintiff, *see Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974).

23 **III. Screening Order**

24 The court has reviewed plaintiff’s complaint (ECF No. 1) pursuant to § 1915A and finds it
25 must be dismissed. The complaint alleges that the California Correctional Health Care Services
26 (“CCHCS”) and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (“CDCR”) breached
27 the confidentiality of plaintiff’s personal information and medical records when an unencrypted
28 laptop was stolen from the vehicle of a CCHCS employee. Plaintiff alleges he is now exposed to

1 identity theft as a result of defendants' negligence. Attached to the complaint is a letter from
2 CCHCS notifying plaintiff of this "potential breach." ECF No. 1, Ex. A. The letter noted that the
3 laptop was password protected, and informed plaintiff as follows:

4 We do not know if any sensitive information was contained in the
5 laptop. To the extent any sensitive information may have been
6 contained in the laptop, we do not know if the information included
7 any of your information. If your information was included, the
8 nature of the information may have included confidential medical,
9 mental health, and custodial information. To the extent any
sensitive information may have been contained in the laptop, we
estimate that it would have been limited to information related to
your custody and care, if any, between 1996 and 2014.

10 *Id.* Plaintiff asserts a Fourth Amendment claim and various state law claims. He seeks damages
11 as relief. As set forth below, the complaint demonstrate a lack of standing, names defendants
12 who are immune from suit, and otherwise fails to state a cognizable claim under the applicable
13 standards.

14 First, plaintiff is required to establish standing for each claim he asserts. *DaimlerChrysler*
15 *Corp. v. Cuno*, 547 U.S. 332, 352 (2006). If a plaintiff has no standing, the court has no subject
16 matter jurisdiction. *Nat'l Wildlife Fed'n v. Adams*, 629 F.2d 587, 593 n. 11 (9th Cir. 1980).
17 There are three requirements that must be met for a plaintiff to have standing: (1) the plaintiff
18 must have suffered an "injury in fact"—an invasion of a legally protected interest which is both
19 concrete and particularized and actual or imminent; (2) there must be a causal connection
20 between the injury and the conduct complained of; and (3) it must be likely that the injury will be
21 redressed by a favorable decision. *Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 560-61 (1992);
22 *Wash. Legal Found. v. Legal Found. of Wash.*, 271 F.3d 835, 847 (9th Cir. 2001) (en banc).

23 The constitutional right to informational privacy extends to medical information. *Norman-*
24 *Bloodsaw v. Lawrence Berkeley Lab.*, 135 F.3d 1260, 1269 (9th Cir. 1998) ("The constitutionally
25 protected privacy interest in avoiding disclosure of personal matters clearly encompasses medical
26 information and its confidentiality.") (citing *Doe v. Attorney Gen. of the United States*, 941 F.2d
27 780, 795 (9th Cir. 1991)). In this case, however, the disclosure of plaintiff's medical
28 information, and therefore any injury, is entirely speculative. Plaintiff has not shown he has

1 actual standing to sue because the complaint and the referenced letter demonstrate only a
2 “potential” breach of plaintiff’s personal information. It is unknown whether the stolen laptop
3 contained any sensitive information at all and even if it did, plaintiff alleges no actual misuse of
4 such information. Plaintiff cannot state a claim for relief based upon the speculative breach of his
5 sensitive information. Any claim for violation of his constitutional right to informational privacy
6 should be dismissed without prejudice for lack of standing. *See Fleck & Assocs., Inc. v. City of*
7 *Phoenix*, 471 F.3d 1100, 1106-07 (9th Cir. 2006) (dismissal for lack of standing is without
8 prejudice).

9 Second, state agencies, such as CDCR and CCHCS, are immune from suit under the
10 Eleventh Amendment. *See Will v. Michigan Dep’t of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 66 (1989); *Lucas*
11 *v. Dep’t of Corr.*, 66 F.3d 245, 248 (9th Cir. 1995) (per curiam) (holding that prisoner’s Eighth
12 Amendment claims against CDCR for damages and injunctive relief were barred by Eleventh
13 Amendment immunity); *Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984)
14 (Eleventh Amendment immunity extends to state agencies); *see also Hafer v. Melo*, 502 U.S. 21,
15 30 (1991) (clarifying that Eleventh Amendment does not bar suits against state officials sued in
16 their individual capacities, nor does it bar suits for prospective injunctive relief against state
17 officials sued in their official capacities).

18 Third, plaintiff does not allege that any individual defendant is liable for any
19 constitutional violation. To state a claim under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege: (1) the violation of
20 a federal constitutional or statutory right; and (2) that the violation was committed by a person
21 acting under the color of state law. *See West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988); *Jones v. Williams*,
22 297 F.3d 930, 934 (9th Cir. 2002). An individual defendant is not liable on a civil rights claim
23 unless the facts establish the defendant’s personal involvement in the constitutional deprivation or
24 a causal connection between the defendant’s wrongful conduct and the alleged constitutional
25 deprivation. *See Hansen v. Black*, 885 F.2d 642, 646 (9th Cir. 1989); *Johnson v. Duffy*, 588 F.2d
26 740, 743-44 (9th Cir. 1978). Plaintiff may not sue any official on the theory that the official is

27 ////

28 ////

1 liable for the unconstitutional conduct of his or her subordinates. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662,
2 679 (2009). He must identify the particular person or persons who violated his rights. He must
3 also plead facts showing how that particular person was involved in the alleged violation.

4 Fourth, the complaint fails to state a claim for violation of the Fourth Amendment, which
5 governs the reasonableness of government searches and seizures. Here, no government search or
6 seizure is alleged. Instead, plaintiff claims that due to the government's negligence, his personal
7 information was stolen. Negligence, however, does not amount to a violation of a federal
8 constitutional or statutory right. *See Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 837 (1994); *Doe v. Beard*,
9 EDCV 13-02262 DDP, 2014 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 95643, at *16-18 (C.D. Cal. July 14, 2014)
10 (analyzing claim based on negligent disclosure of medical records under Fourteenth Amendment
11 due process standards and determining that allegations were not sufficient to state a claim);
12 *Davidson v. Cannon*, 474 U.S. 344, 347 (1986) (“[T]he Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth
13 Amendment is not implicated by the lack of due care of an official causing unintended injury to
14 life, liberty or property. In other words, where a government official is merely negligent in
15 causing the injury, no procedure for compensation is constitutionally required.”).

16 As set forth above, the complaint demonstrates that plaintiff has no standing to pursue his
17 federal claim and otherwise fails to demonstrate a violation of plaintiff's federal rights. As such,
18 the court declines to address plaintiff's purported state law claims. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

19 Leave to amend in this case would be futile, as the complaint and its attachments reveal
20 that there is no actual or concrete injury to plaintiff. Because these deficiencies cannot be cured
21 by further amendment, the complaint must be dismissed without leave to amend. *Silva v. Di*
22 *Vittorio*, 658 F.3d 1090, 1105 (9th Cir. 2011) (“Dismissal of a pro se complaint without leave to
23 amend is proper only if it is absolutely clear that the deficiencies of the complaint could not be
24 cured by amendment.” (internal quotation marks omitted)); *Doe v. United States*, 58 F.3d 494,
25 497 (9th Cir. 1995) (“[A] district court should grant leave to amend even if no request to amend
26 the pleading was made, unless it determines that the pleading could not be cured by the allegation
27 of other facts.”). Further, the dismissal is without prejudice should plaintiff's claims ever ripen to

28 ////

1 an actual case or controversy arising from an injury due to an actual disclosure of any of his
2 information.

3 **IV. Summary**

4 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:

- 5 1. Plaintiff's application to proceed in forma pauperis (ECF No. 2) is granted.
- 6 2. Plaintiff shall pay the statutory filing fee of \$350. All payments shall be collected in
7 accordance with the notice to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
8 filed concurrently herewith.

9 Further, IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED that this action be dismissed without
10 prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and the Clerk be directed to close the case.

11 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District Judge
12 assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within fourteen days
13 after being served with these findings and recommendations, any party may file written
14 objections with the court and serve a copy on all parties. Such a document should be captioned
15 "Objections to Magistrate Judge's Findings and Recommendations." Failure to file objections
16 within the specified time may waive the right to appeal the District Court's order. *Turner v.*
17 *Duncan*, 158 F.3d 449, 455 (9th Cir. 1998); *Martinez v. Ylst*, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991).

18 DATED: April 20, 2017.

19 
20 EDMUND F. BRENNAN
21 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
22
23
24
25
26
27
28