

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO

Civil Action No. 13-cv-01103-BNB

BRIAN PATRICK O'CONNOR,

Plaintiff,

v.

TED MINK, is sued individually, and  
JOHN DOE, is sued individually,

Defendants.

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ORDER DIRECTING PLAINTIFF TO FILE AMENDED COMPLAINT

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Plaintiff, Brian Patrick O'Connor, currently is incarcerated at the Jefferson County Detention Facility in Golden, Colorado. He filed *pro se* a Prisoner Complaint (ECF No. 1) for money damages and injunctive relief. He has been granted leave to proceed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

The Court must construe liberally the Prisoner Complaint because Mr. O'Connor is not represented by an attorney. See *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972); *Hall v. Bellmon*, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991). However, the Court should not be an advocate for a *pro se* litigant. See *Hall*, 935 F.2d at 1110. For the reasons stated below, Mr. O'Connor will be ordered to file an amended complaint if he wishes to pursue his claims in this action.

The Court has reviewed the Prisoner Complaint and finds that it does not comply with the pleading requirements of Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The twin purposes of a complaint are to give the opposing parties fair notice of the basis for

the claims against them so that they may respond and to allow the court to conclude that the allegations, if proven, show that the plaintiff is entitled to relief. See *Monument Builders of Greater Kansas City, Inc. v. American Cemetery Ass'n of Kansas*, 891 F.2d 1473, 1480 (10th Cir. 1989). The requirements of Fed. R. Civ. P. 8 are designed to meet these purposes. See *TV Communications Network, Inc. v. ESPN, Inc.*, 767 F. Supp. 1062, 1069 (D. Colo. 1991), *aff'd*, 964 F.2d 1022 (10th Cir. 1992). Specifically, Rule 8(a) provides that a complaint “must contain (1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for the court’s jurisdiction, . . . (2) a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief; and (3) a demand for the relief sought.” The philosophy of Rule 8(a) is reinforced by Rule 8(d)(1), which provides that “[e]ach allegation must be simple, concise, and direct.” Taken together, Rules 8(a) and (d)(1) underscore the emphasis placed on clarity and brevity by the federal pleading rules. Prolix, vague, or unintelligible pleadings violate Rule 8.

Mr. O’Connor’s complaint is vague. He apparently was convicted on alcohol and drug charges pursuant to Colo. Rev. Stat. § 42-4-1301, and asserts two claims for relief against Defendant Ted Mink, Jefferson County sheriff, for violations of his right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment and right to equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment based upon the conditions of his confinement. However, Mr. O’Connor fails to assert any facts that make clear how his rights have been violated.

In order to state a claim in federal court, Mr. O’Connor “must explain what each defendant did to him or her; when the defendant did it; how the defendant’s action harmed him or her; and, what specific legal right the plaintiff believes the defendant

violated.” *Nasious v. Two Unknown B.I.C.E. Agents*, 492 F.3d 1158, 1163 (10th Cir. 2007). The general rule that *pro se* pleadings must be construed liberally has limits and “the court cannot take on the responsibility of serving as the litigant’s attorney in constructing arguments and searching the record.” *Garrett v. Selby Connor Maddux & Janer*, 425 F.3d 836, 840 (10th Cir. 2005).

In addition, § 1983 “provides a federal cause of action against any person who, acting under color of state law, deprives another of his federal rights.” *Conn v. Gabbert*, 526 U.S. 286, 290 (1999); *see also Wyatt v. Cole*, 504 U.S. 158, 161 (1992) (“[T]he purpose of § 1983 is to deter state actors from using the badge of their authority to deprive individuals of their federally guaranteed rights and to provide relief to victims if such deterrence fails.”). Therefore, Mr. O’Connor should name as defendants in his amended complaint only those persons that he contends actually violated his federal constitutional rights.

Personal participation is an essential allegation in a civil rights action. *See Bennett v. Passic*, 545 F.2d 1260, 1262-63 (10th Cir. 1976). To establish personal participation, Mr. O’Connor must show that each defendant caused the deprivation of a federal right. *See Kentucky v. Graham*, 473 U.S. 159, 166 (1985). There must be an affirmative link between the alleged constitutional violation and each defendant’s participation, control or direction, or failure to supervise. *See Butler v. City of Norman*, 992 F.2d 1053, 1055 (10th Cir. 1993). A supervisory officials may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of his or her subordinates on a theory of respondeat superior. *See Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 676 (2009). Furthermore,

when a plaintiff sues an official under *Bivens* or § 1983 for

conduct “arising from his or her superintendent responsibilities,” the plaintiff must plausibly plead and eventually prove not only that the official’s subordinates violated the Constitution, but that the official by virtue of his own conduct and state of mind did so as well.

*See Dodds v. Richardson*, 614 F.3d 1185, 1198 (10th Cir. 2010) (quoting *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 677). Therefore, in order to succeed in a § 1983 suit against a government official for conduct that arises out of his or her supervisory responsibilities, a plaintiff must allege and demonstrate that: “(1) the defendant promulgated, created, implemented or possessed responsibility for the continued operation of a policy that (2) caused the complained of constitutional harm, and (3) acted with the state of mind required to establish the alleged constitutional deprivation.” *Id.* at 1199.

Mr. O’Connor may use fictitious names such as “John or Jane Doe” if he does not know the real names of the individuals who allegedly violated his rights. However, if Mr. O’Connor uses fictitious names he must provide sufficient information about each defendant so that he or she can be identified for purposes of service.

A decision to dismiss a complaint pursuant to Rule 8 is within the trial court’s sound discretion. *See Atkins v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.*, 967 F.2d 1197, 1203 (8th Cir. 1992); *Gillibeau v. City of Richmond*, 417 F.2d 426, 431 (9th Cir. 1969). The Court finds that the complaint does not meet the requirements of Fed. R. Civ. P. 8. Mr. O’Connor will be given an opportunity to cure the deficiencies in his complaint by submitting an amended complaint that states claims clearly and concisely in compliance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 8, and alleges specific facts that demonstrate how each named defendant personally participated in the asserted constitutional violations. The Court will not consider any claims raised in separate attachments, amendments,

supplements, motions, or other documents not included in the amended complaint

Accordingly, it is

ORDERED that Plaintiff, Brian Patrick O'Connor, file, **within thirty (30) days from the date of this order**, an amended Prisoner Complaint that complies with the pleading requirements of Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure as discussed in this order. It is

FURTHER ORDERED that Mr. O'Connor shall obtain the Court-approved Prisoner Complaint form (with the assistance of his case manager or the facility's legal assistant), along with the applicable instructions, at [www.cod.uscourts.gov](http://www.cod.uscourts.gov), and use that form in submitting the amended complaint. It is

FURTHER ORDERED that, if Mr. O'Connor fails to file an amended Prisoner Complaint that complies with this order within the time allowed, the complaint, as amended, and the action will be dismissed without further notice.

DATED April 26, 2013, at Denver, Colorado.

BY THE COURT:

s/ Boyd N. Boland  
United States Magistrate Judge