

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO

Civil Action No. 14-cv-02633-BNB

JOSEPH SCOTT CARTER,

Plaintiff,

v.

KATHRYN ANN HEROLD, Attorney #40075, and  
20TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURTS OF BOULDER, CO,

Defendants.

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ORDER DIRECTING PLAINTIFF TO FILE AMENDED COMPLAINT

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Plaintiff, Joseph Scott Carter, is a prisoner in the custody of the Colorado Department of Corrections at the San Carlos Correctional Facility in Pueblo, Colorado. He submitted *pro se* a Prisoner Complaint (ECF No. 1) pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and a Prisoner's Motion and Affidavit for Leave to Proceed Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915 (ECF No. 3). He was granted leave to proceed *in forma pauperis* pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

The Court must construe the Prisoner Complaint liberally because Mr. Carter 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. Carter will be ordered to file an amended Prisoner Complaint if he wishes to pursue his claims in this action.

Mr. Carter appears to be challenging his state court conviction by challenging his

state competency proceedings. He is suing his public defender and the state court in which he was convicted. He asks for money damages, habeas corpus relief, and injunctive relief.

Mr. Carter's claims challenging the validity of his current incarceration are barred by the rule in *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477 (1994). In *Heck*, the Supreme Court held that if a judgment for damages favorable to a prisoner in a § 1983 action necessarily would imply the invalidity of his or her criminal conviction or sentence, the § 1983 action does not arise until the conviction or sentence has been reversed on direct appeal, expunged by executive order, declared invalid by an authorized state tribunal, or called into question by the issuance of a federal habeas writ. See *Heck*, 512 U.S. at 486-87.

In addition, a civil rights action filed by a state prisoner "is barred (absent prior invalidation) – no matter the relief sought (damages or equitable relief), no matter the target of the prisoner's suit (state conduct leading to conviction or internal prison proceedings) – if success in that action would necessarily demonstrate the invalidity of confinement or its duration." *Wilkinson v. Dotson*, 544 U.S. 74, 81-82 (2005). Mr. Carter does not allege that he has invalidated any convictions or sentences that pertain to his current confinement and its duration.

To the extent Mr. Carter may seek to challenge his criminal conviction or obtain his release from incarceration, his sole federal remedy is a writ of habeas corpus, after he has exhausted state court remedies. See *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 504 (1973). The Court will not consider the merits of any habeas corpus claims in this civil rights action.

If no final judgment has been entered in the state-court action, this Court still must abstain from exercising jurisdiction over claims asking the Court to intervene in ongoing state proceedings pursuant to *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 44 (1971).

Mr. Carter may not sue his public defender. Defense attorneys, whether court-appointed or privately retained, performing in the traditional role of attorney for the defendant in a criminal proceeding are not deemed to act under color of state law; such attorneys represent their client only, not the state, and cannot be sued in a § 1983 action. See *Polk County v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 325 (1981); *Hunt v. Bennett*, 17 F.3d 1263, 1268 (10th Cir. 1994).

Mr. Carter also may not sue the 20th Judicial District Courts of Boulder, Colorado, because it is protected by Eleventh Amendment immunity. See *Steadfast Ins. Co. v. Agricultural Ins. Co.*, 507 F.3d 1250, 1252-53 (10th Cir. 2007) (noting that the Eleventh Amendment protects states and state entities regardless of whether a plaintiff seeks declaratory or injunctive relief or monetary damages).

The amended Prisoner Complaint Mr. Carter will be directed to file must 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.

In order to state a claim in federal court, Mr. Carter “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).

Section 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. Carter 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. Carter 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). 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). Instead,

when a plaintiff sues an official under *Bivens* [*v. Six Unknown Named Agents of Fed. Bureau of Narcotics*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971),] 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. Carter 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.

Carter uses fictitious names he must provide sufficient information about each defendant so that he or she can be identified for purposes of service.

Accordingly, it is

ORDERED that Plaintiff, Joseph Scott Carter, file an amended Prisoner Complaint that sues the proper parties and complies with Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure **within thirty (30) days from the date of this order**. Any papers that Plaintiff files in response to this order must include the civil action number on this order. It is

FURTHER ORDERED that Plaintiff shall obtain (with the assistance of his case manager or the facility's legal assistant) the Court-approved form for filing a Prisoner Complaint, along with the applicable instructions, at [www.cod.uscourts.gov](http://www.cod.uscourts.gov), and shall use all pages of those forms in filing an amended Prisoner Complaint. It is

FURTHER ORDERED that, if Plaintiff fails to file an amended Prisoner Complaint as directed **within thirty days from the date of this order**, the Prisoner Complaint and action may be dismissed without further notice.

DATED September 25, 2014, at Denver, Colorado.

BY THE COURT:

s/ Boyd N. Boland  
United States Magistrate Judge