

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

ROBERT ALLEN SMITH,

Plaintiff,

v.

CAMDEN COUNTY CORRECTIONAL
FACILITY; WARDEN OWENS,

Defendants.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action

No. 16-cv-07187 (JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES:

Curtis Mincey, Plaintiff Pro Se
1314 Fairview Street, Apt. B
Camden, NJ 08104

SIMANDLE, Chief District Judge:

1. Plaintiff Robert Allen Smith seeks to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the Camden County Correctional Facility ("CCCF") and Warden Owens ("Warden"). Complaint, Docket Entry 1.

2. Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must *sua sponte* dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is subject to *sua sponte* screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C.

§ 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*.

3. For the reasons set forth below, the Court will dismiss the complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

4. To survive *sua sponte* screening for failure to state a claim, the complaint must allege "sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014). "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

5. Plaintiff alleges he experienced unconstitutional conditions of confinement at the CCCF from October 1, 2015 through February 19, 2016. Complaint § III. The fact section of the complaint states: "I was subjected to very unhealthy conditions, such as overcrowdedness, made to sleep on floor breathing filthy mold and unsanitary condition." *Id.* Even

accepting the statement as true for screening purposes only, there is not enough factual support for the Court to infer a constitutional violation has occurred.

6. The mere fact that an individual is lodged temporarily in a cell with more persons than its intended design does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. See *Rhodes v. Chapman*, 452 U.S. 337, 348-50 (1981) (holding double-celling by itself did not violate Eighth Amendment); *Carson v. Mulvihill*, 488 F. App'x 554, 560 (3d Cir. 2012) ("[M]ere double-bunking does not constitute punishment, because there is no 'one man, one cell principle lurking in the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.'" (quoting *Bell v. Wolfish*, 441 U.S. 520, 542 (1979))). More is needed to demonstrate that such crowded conditions, for a pretrial detainee, shocks the conscience and thus violates due process rights. See *Hubbard v. Taylor*, 538 F.3d 229, 233 (3d Cir. 2008) (noting due process analysis requires courts to consider whether the totality of the conditions "cause[s] inmates to endure such genuine privations and hardship over an extended period of time, that the adverse conditions become excessive in relation to the purposes assigned to them."). Some relevant factors are the dates and length of the confinement(s), whether Plaintiff was a pretrial detainee or convicted prisoner, etc.

7. Moreover, Plaintiff has not alleged sufficient facts to support an inference that the named Defendants may be held liable for the alleged constitutional violations.

8. First, Plaintiff seeks monetary damages from CCCF for the allegedly unconstitutional conditions of his confinement. As the CCCF is not a "state actor" within the meaning of § 1983, the claims against it must be dismissed with prejudice. See *Crawford v. McMillian*, 660 F. App'x 113, 116 (3d Cir. 2016) ("[T]he prison is not an entity subject to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.") (citing *Fischer v. Cahill*, 474 F.2d 991, 992 (3d Cir. 1973)).

9. Moreover, Plaintiff has not pled sufficient facts to support an inference that the Warden was personally involved in either the creation of, or failure to address, the conditions of his confinement. State actors are liable only for their own unconstitutional conduct and may not be held liable for the unconstitutional conduct of their subordinates under a theory of *respondeat superior*. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 676 (2009); *Bistrrian v. Levi*, 696 F.3d 352, 366 (3d Cir. 2012).

10. As Plaintiff may be able to amend his complaint to address the deficiencies noted by the Court, the Court shall grant Plaintiff leave to amend the complaint within 30 days of the date of this order.

11. Plaintiff should note that when an amended complaint is filed, the original complaint no longer performs any function in the case and cannot be utilized to cure defects in the amended complaint, unless the relevant portion is specifically incorporated in the new complaint. 6 Wright, Miller & Kane, Federal Practice and Procedure 1476 (2d ed. 1990) (footnotes omitted). An amended complaint may adopt some or all of the allegations in the original complaint, but the identification of the particular allegations to be adopted must be clear and explicit. *Id.* To avoid confusion, the safer course is to file an amended complaint that is complete in itself.¹ *Id.*

12. For the reasons stated above, the complaint is dismissed without prejudice for failure to state a claim. The Court will reopen the matter in the event Plaintiff files an amended complaint within the time allotted by the Court.

13. An appropriate order follows.

February 28, 2017
Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle
JEROME B. SIMANDLE
Chief U.S. District Judge

¹ The amended complaint shall be subject to screening prior to service.