

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTE DIVISION
3:18-cv-198-FDW**

JAMES A. WILSON,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
vs.)	<u>ORDER</u>
)	
BRETT SIMMONS, et al.,)	
)	
Defendants.)	
_____)	

THIS MATTER is before the Court on initial review of *pro se* Plaintiff’s Complaint, (Doc. No. 1). Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. See (Doc. No. 7).

I. BACKGROUND

Pro se Plaintiff has filed a civil rights suit pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for incidents that allegedly occurred at the Lanesboro Correctional Institution.¹ He names as Defendants Lanesboro C.I. Sergeant Brett Simmons and Correctional Officers J. Honbarrier, K. Hinson, and P. Dmanto.

Construing the Complaint liberally and accepting it as true, Plaintiff was maced and tackled to the ground after numerous officers showed up on a code at approximately 2:45 PM on March 3, 2017. Plaintiff was lying face down on the floor when Dmanto and Simmons beat him with their nightsticks, which required 16 stitches on Plaintiff’s head. Plaintiff was secured in full restrains and escorted to a room where Hinson and Honbarrier kicked and punched him, resulting in a broken jaw.

Plaintiff seeks \$250,000 for pain and suffering.

¹ Plaintiff’s address of record is at the Polk C.I.

II. STANDARD OF REVIEW

Because Plaintiff is a prisoner proceeding *in forma pauperis*, the Court must review the Complaint to determine whether it is subject to dismissal on the grounds that it is “(i) frivolous or malicious; (ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (iii) seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). In its frivolity review, a court must determine whether the Complaint raises an indisputably meritless legal theory or is founded upon clearly baseless factual contentions, such as fantastic or delusional scenarios. Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 327-28 (1989). A complaint should not be dismissed for failure to state a claim “unless ‘after accepting all well-pleaded allegations in the plaintiff’s complaint as true and drawing all reasonable factual inferences from those facts in the plaintiff’s favor, it appears certain that the plaintiff cannot prove any set of facts in support of his claim entitling him to relief.’” Veney v. Wyche, 293 F.3d 726, 730 (4th Cir. 2002) (quoting Edwards v. City of Goldsboro, 178 F.3d 231, 244 (4th Cir. 1999)).

A *pro se* complaint must be construed liberally. Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972); see also Smith v. Smith, 589 F.3d 736, 738 (4th Cir. 2009) (“Liberal construction of the pleadings is particularly appropriate where ... there is a *pro se* complaint raising civil rights issues.”). However, the liberal construction requirement will not permit a district court to ignore a clear failure to allege facts in his complaint which set forth a claim that is cognizable under federal law. Weller v. Dep’t of Soc. Servs., 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990). A *pro se* complaint must still contain sufficient facts “to raise a right to relief above the speculative level” and “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 570 (2007); see Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009) (the Twombly plausibility standard applies to all federal civil complaints including those filed under § 1983). This “plausibility standard requires a plaintiff

to demonstrate more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully.” Francis v. Giacomelli, 588 F.3d 186, 193 (4th Cir. 2009) (internal quotation marks omitted). He must articulate facts that, when accepted as true, demonstrate he has stated a claim entitling him to relief. Id.

III. DISCUSSION

“[T]he treatment a prisoner receives in prison and the conditions under which he is confined are subject to scrutiny under the Eighth Amendment,” Helling v. McKinney, 509 U.S. 25, 31 (1993). In its prohibition of “cruel and unusual punishments,” the Eighth Amendment places restraints on prison officials, who may not, for example, use excessive physical force against prisoners. See Hudson, 503 U.S. at 1.

A prison official violates the Eighth Amendment only when two requirements are met. First, the deprivation alleged must be, objectively, “sufficiently serious,” Wilson v. Seiter, 501 U.S. 294, 298 (1991); see also Hudson, 503 U.S. at 5, and must result in the denial of “the minimal civilized measure of life’s necessities,” Rhodes v. Chapman, 452 U.S. 337, 347 (1981). The second requirement is that a prison official must have a “sufficiently culpable state of mind.” Wilson, 501 U.S. at 297, 302-03; Hudson, 503 U.S. at 5, 8. “[T]he use of excessive physical force against a prisoner may constitute cruel and unusual punishment [even] when the inmate does not suffer serious injury.” Hudson, 503 U.S. 1, 4 (1992); see Wilkins v. Gaddy, 559 U.S. 34, 34 (2010). The “core judicial inquiry,” is not whether a certain quantum of injury was sustained, but rather “whether force was applied in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline, or maliciously and sadistically to cause harm.” Hudson, 503 U.S. at 7. “When prison officials maliciously and sadistically use force to cause harm,” the Court recognized, “contemporary standards of decency always are violated ... whether or not significant injury is evident. Otherwise, the Eighth

Amendment would permit any physical punishment, no matter how diabolic or inhuman, inflicting less than some arbitrary quantity of injury.” Hudson, 503 U.S. at 9, 13–14.

Plaintiff’s allegations that Defendants beat and kicked him after he was either face down on the ground or fully restrained sufficiently state a claim for the use of excessive force. These claims will be permitted to proceed

IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated herein, the Plaintiff’s excessive force claims are sufficient to pass initial review pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED that:

1. Plaintiff’s § 1983 claims against Defendants Simmons, Honbarrier, Hinson and Dmanto for excessive force survive initial review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.
2. **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT** the Clerk of Court shall commence the procedure for waiver of service as set forth in Local Rule 4.3 for Defendants **Simmons, Honbarrier, Hinson and Dmanto**, who are current or former employees of NC DPS.

Signed: August 13, 2018



Frank D. Whitney
Chief United States District Judge

