

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION

HOWARD BODDIE, JR.,

Plaintiff,

v.

Civil Action 2:14-cv-1228
Judge Peter C. Economus
Magistrate Judge Elizabeth P. Deavers

MICHAEL A. PRISLEY

Defendant.

ORDER AND REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Plaintiff initiated this action on August 14, 2014. This matter is before the Court for consideration of Plaintiff's Motion for Leave to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis*. (ECF No. 1.) Plaintiff's Motion is **GRANTED**. Plaintiff's trust account statement reveals that he currently possesses the sum of \$7.50 in his prison account, which is insufficient to pay the full filing fee. His application indicates that his average monthly deposits for the six-month period prior to filing his application to proceed *in forma pauperis* were \$19.33. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), the custodian of Plaintiff's inmate trust account (Inmate Identification Number # A629680) at the Chillicothe Correctional Institution ("CCI") is **DIRECTED** to submit to the Clerk of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio as an initial partial payment, 20% of the greater of either the average monthly deposits to the inmate trust account or the average monthly balance in the inmate trust account, for the six-months immediately preceding the filing of the Complaint.

After full payment of the initial, partial filing fee, the custodian shall submit 20% of the

inmate's preceding monthly income credited to the account, but only when the amount in the account exceeds \$10.00 until the full fee of \$350.00 has been paid to the Clerk of this Court. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). *McGore v. Wigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601 (6th Cir. 1997).

Checks should be made payable to: Clerk, United States District Court. The checks should be sent to:

Prisoner Accounts Receivable
260 U.S. Courthouse
85 Marconi Boulevard
Columbus, Ohio 43215

The prisoner's name and this case number must be included on each check.

This matter is also before the Court for an initial screen pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A to identify cognizable claims and to recommend dismissal of Plaintiff's Complaint, or any portion of it, which is frivolous, 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. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). Having performed the initial screen, for the reasons that follow, it is **RECOMMENDED** that the Court **DISMISS** Plaintiff's Complaint in its entirety.

I.

Plaintiff is an inmate housed at CCI. Defendant is an attorney licensed in the State of Ohio. (Compl. 2, ECF No. 1-1.) Defendant represented Plaintiff in case number 08CR-05-3419, a criminal matter in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. (*Id.* at ¶ 5.) Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, purporting to assert claims of attorney malpractice, breach of contract, and violation of his civil rights related to Defendant's representation in the criminal matter. Specifically, Plaintiff contends that Defendant misrepresented their attorney-client relationship as court-appointed, although Plaintiff paid

Defendant a retainer to represent him. Plaintiff further asserts that Defendant failed to visit him in jail, refused to demand discovery which would have been exculpatory, misrepresented Plaintiff in front of the jury during *voire dire*, and withheld exculpatory evidence. Plaintiff seeks monetary damages against Defendant in the amount of \$1.5 million, as well as injunctive relief.

II.

Congress enacted 28 U.S.C. § 1915, the federal *in forma pauperis* statute, seeking to “lower judicial access barriers to the indigent.” *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992). In doing so, however, “Congress recognized that ‘a litigant whose filing fees and court costs are assumed by the public, unlike a paying litigant, lacks an economic incentive to refrain from filing frivolous, malicious, or repetitive lawsuits.’” *Id.* at 31 (quoting *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324 (1989)). To address this concern, Congress included subsection (e)¹ as part of the statute, which provides in pertinent part:

(2) Notwithstanding any filing fee, or any portion thereof, that may have been paid, the court shall dismiss the case at any time if the court determines that--

* * *

(B) the action or appeal--

(i) is frivolous or malicious;

(ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) & (ii); *Denton*, 504 U.S. at 31. Thus, § 1915(e) requires *sua sponte* dismissal of an action upon the Court’s determination that the action is frivolous or malicious, or upon determination that the action fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *See Hill v. Lappin*, 630 F.3d 468, 470–71 (6th Cir. 2010) (applying Federal Rule of

¹Formerly 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d).

Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) standards to review under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A and 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii)).

To survive a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim under Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, a plaintiff must satisfy the basic federal pleading requirements set forth in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a). Under Rule 8(a)(2), a complaint must contain a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). Although this pleading standard does not require “‘detailed factual allegations,’ . . . [a] pleading that offers ‘labels and conclusions’ or ‘a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action,’” is insufficient. *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)). Further, a complaint will not “suffice if it tenders ‘naked assertion[s]’ devoid of ‘further factual enhancement.’” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 557). Instead, to survive a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim under Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, “a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter . . . to ‘state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.’” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). Facial plausibility is established “when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* In considering whether this facial plausibility standard is met, a Court must construe the complaint in the light most favorable to the non-moving party, accept all factual allegations as true, and make reasonable inferences in favor of the non-moving party. *Total Benefits Planning Agency, Inc. v. Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield*, 552 F.3d 430, 434 (6th Cir. 2008) (citations omitted). The Court is not required, however, to accept as true mere legal conclusions unsupported by factual allegations. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). In addition, the Court holds *pro se* complaints “‘to less stringent standards than

formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Garrett v. Belmont Cnty. Sheriff’s Dep’t*, No. 08-3978, 2010 WL 1252923, at *2 (6th Cir. Apr. 1, 2010) (quoting *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)).

III.

The Undersigned concludes that Plaintiff’s Complaint, which challenges Defendant’s legal representation in a criminal case, fails to state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. To plead a cause of action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a Plaintiff must plead two elements: (1) a person acting under color of state law caused deprivation of a right that is (2) secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States. *Hunt v. Sycamore Cmty. School Dist. Bd. of Educ.*, 542 F.3d 529, 534 (6th Cir. 2008). It is well-settled that a lawyer representing a client is not a state actor ‘under color of law’ within the meaning of § 1983.” *Dallas v. Holmes*, 137 F. App’x 746, 752 (6th Cir. 2005) (citing *Polk County v. Dodson*, 454 U.S. 312, 318 (1981)). Consequently, “[a] defense attorney engaging in the traditional functions of a lawyer representing a client in a criminal proceeding is not acting for the state for purposes of Section 1983.” *Garcia v. Nerlinger*, No. 1:10-cv-788, 2011 WL 1395595, at *1 (S.D. Ohio April 12, 2011); *see also Cudejko v. Goldstein*, 22 F. App’x 484, 485 (6th Cir. 2001) (concluding that the state court criminal defense attorney was not a state actor, which precluded a § 1983 claim for ineffective assistance of counsel). Here, the conduct that forms the basis of Plaintiff’s claims falls squarely within the traditional functions of a lawyer representing a client. Accordingly, Plaintiff has failed to allege sufficient state action for the purposes of his federal claim under § 1983 against Prisley, his state-court attorney. Accordingly, his action must be dismissed pursuant to § 1915.

To the extent Plaintiff attempts to bring state-law claims of breach of contract and

attorney malpractice, the Undersigned recommends that the Court decline to exercise jurisdiction over those claims. Under 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c)(3), the Court may decline to exercise supplemental jurisdiction when the Court “has dismissed all claims over which it has original jurisdiction.” The United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit has held that “[i]f the federal claims are dismissed before trial, the state claims generally should be dismissed as well.” *Brooks v. Rothe*, 577 F.3d 701, 709 (6th Cir. 2009) (internal quotations omitted). Here, the Complaint confirms that Plaintiff and Defendant are citizens of Ohio such that the Court may not exercise jurisdiction based on diversity of the parties under 28 U.S.C. § 1332. (Compl. 1, ECF No. 1.) Thus, the Court does not have original jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s state-law claims. The Undersigned recommends dismissal of Plaintiff’s purported federal claims. Under these circumstances, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(c)(3), the Undersigned **RECOMMENDS** that the Court decline to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over any remaining state-law claims, and that it **DISMISS WITHOUT PREJUDICE** any such claims.

IV.

Accordingly, Plaintiff’s Motion for Leave to Proceed *In Forma Pauperis* is **GRANTED**. It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Complaint be **DISMISSED** for failure to state a claim.

PROCEDURE ON OBJECTIONS

If any party seeks review by the District Judge of this Report and Recommendation, that party may, within fourteen (14) days, file and serve on all parties objections to the Report and Recommendation, specifically designating this Report and Recommendation, and the part in question, as well as the basis for objection. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). Response to objections must be filed within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy.

Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b).

The parties are specifically advised that the failure to object to the Report and Recommendation will result in a waiver of the right to *de novo* review of by the District Judge and waiver of the right to appeal the judgment of the District Court. *See, e.g., Pfahler v. Nat'l Latex Prod. Co.*, 517 F.3d 816, 829 (6th Cir. 2007) (holding that “failure to object to the magistrate judge’s recommendations constituted a waiver of [th defendant’s] ability to appeal the district court’s ruling”); *United States v. Sullivan*, 431 F.3d 976, 984 (6th Cir. 2005) (holding that defendant waived appeal of district court’s denial of pretrial motion by failing to timely object to magistrate judge’s report and recommendation). Even when timely objections are filed, appellate review of issues not raised in those objections is waived. *Robert v. Tesson*, 507 F.3d 981, 994 (6th Cir. 2007) (“[A] general objection to a magistrate judge’s report, which fails to specify the issues of contention, does not suffice to preserve an issue for appeal” (citation omitted))

Date: August 19, 2014

/s/ Elizabeth A. Preston Deavers

Elizabeth A. Preston Deavers
United States Magistrate Judge