
THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF UTAH

JAMES A. MAZZETTI III,

Plaintiff,

v.

ROBERT POWELL et al.,

Defendants.

**MEMORANDUM DECISION & ORDER
TO CURE DEFICIENT COMPLAINT**

Case No. 2:23-CV-725-DAK

District Judge Dale A. Kimball

Plaintiff, self-represented inmate James A. Mazzetti III, brings this civil-rights action, *see* 42 U.S.C.S. § 1983 (2024).¹ Having now screened the Complaint, (ECF No. 4), under its statutory review function, 28 U.S.C.S. § 1915A (2024),² the Court orders Plaintiff to file an amended complaint to cure deficiencies before further pursuing claims.

¹ The federal statute creating a "civil action for deprivation of rights" reads, in pertinent part:

Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory . . . , subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law, suit in equity, or other proper proceeding for redress, except that in any action brought against a judicial officer for an act or omission taken in such officer's judicial capacity, injunctive relief shall not be granted unless a declaratory decree was violated or declaratory relief was unavailable.

42 U.S.C.S. § 1983 (2024).

² The screening statute reads:

(a) Screening.—The court shall review . . . a complaint in a civil action in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity.

(b) Grounds for dismissal.—On review, the court shall identify cognizable claims or dismiss the complaint, or any portion of the complaint, if the complaint—

(1) is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or

(2) seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.

COMPLAINT'S DEFICIENCIES

Complaint:

(a) names many defendants only in the text, not in the Complaint's heading also, as required.

(b) improperly alleges civil-rights violations on a respondeat-superior theory. (See below.)

(c) does not adequately link each element of a failure-to-protect claim to specific named defendant(s). (See below.)

(d) does not adequately link each element of claims of improper medical and physical treatment to specific individually named defendant(s). (See below.)

(e) raises issues of classification change/programming in way that does not support a cause of action. (See below.)

(f) does not adequately link each element of an equal-protection claim to specific named defendant(s). *See Hale v. Fed. Bureau of Prisons*, 759 F. App'x 741, 752 (10th Cir. 2019) (explaining that--to state equal-protection claim--plaintiff must allege facts showing (a) prison officials treated him differently from similarly situated inmates and (b) disparate treatment was not reasonably related to penological interests).

(g) possibly asserts constitutional violations--e.g., "verbal abuse by staff," (ECF No. 4, at 5)--resulting in injuries that appear to be prohibited by 42 U.S.C.S. § 1997e(e) (2024), reading, "No Federal civil action may be brought by a prisoner . . . for mental or emotional injury suffered while in custody without a prior showing of a physical injury or the commission of a sexual act."

(h) has claims possibly based on current confinement; however, the complaint was possibly not submitted using legal help Plaintiff is constitutionally entitled to by Plaintiff's institution--i.e., the prison contract attorneys. *See Lewis v. Casey*, 518 U.S. 343, 356 (1996) (requiring prisoners be given "'adequate law libraries or adequate assistance from persons trained in the law' . . . to ensure that inmates . . . have a reasonably adequate opportunity to file nonfrivolous legal claims challenging their convictions or conditions of confinement") (quoting *Bounds v. Smith*, 430 U.S. 817, 828 (1977) (emphasis added)).

GUIDANCE FOR PLAINTIFF

Rule 8 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires a complaint to contain "(1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for the court's jurisdiction . . . ; (2) a short and plain

28 U.S.C.S. § 1915A (2024).

statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief; and (3) a demand for the relief sought." Rule 8's requirements mean to guarantee "that defendants enjoy fair notice of what the claims against them are and the grounds upon which they rest." *TV Commc'ns Network, Inc. v ESPN, Inc.*, 767 F. Supp. 1062, 1069 (D. Colo. 1991).

Pro se litigants are not excused from meeting these minimal pleading demands. "This is so because a pro se plaintiff requires no special legal training to recount the facts surrounding his alleged injury, and he must provide such facts if the court is to determine whether he makes out a claim on which relief can be granted." *Hall v. Bellmon*, 935 F.2d 1106, 1110 (10th Cir. 1991). Moreover, it is improper for the Court "to assume the role of advocate for a pro se litigant." *Id.* Thus, the Court cannot "supply additional facts, [or] construct a legal theory for plaintiff that assumes facts that have not been pleaded." *Dunn v. White*, 880 F.2d 1188, 1197 (10th Cir. 1989).

Plaintiff should consider these general points before filing an amended complaint:

(i) The revised complaint must stand entirely on its own and shall not refer to, or incorporate by reference, any part of the original complaint. *See Murray v. Archambo*, 132 F.3d 609, 612 (10th Cir. 1998) (stating amended complaint supersedes original). Also an amended complaint may not be added to after filing without moving for amendment. Fed. R. Civ. P. 15.

(ii) Each defendant must be named in the complaint's caption, listed in the section of the complaint setting forth names of each defendant, and affirmatively linked to applicable claims within the "cause of action" section of the complaint.

(iii) The complaint must clearly state what each individual defendant--typically, a named government employee--did to violate Plaintiff's civil rights. *See Bennett v. Passic*, 545 F.2d 1260, 1262-63 (10th Cir. 1976) (stating personal participation of each named defendant is

essential allegation in civil-rights action). "To state a claim, a complaint must 'make clear exactly *who* is alleged to have done *what* to *whom*.'" *Stone v. Albert*, 338 F. App'x 757, 759 (10th Cir. 2009) (unpublished) (emphasis in original) (quoting *Robbins v. Oklahoma*, 519 F.3d 1242, 1250 (10th Cir. 2008)). Plaintiff should also include, as much as possible, specific dates or at least estimates of when alleged constitutional violations occurred.

(iv) Each cause of action, together with the facts and citations that directly support it, should be stated separately. Plaintiff should be as brief as possible while still using enough words to fully explain the "who," "what," "where," "when," and "why" of each claim. *Robbins*, 519 F.3d at 1248 ("The [*Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*] Court was particularly critical of complaints that 'mentioned no specific, time, place, or person involved in the alleged [claim].' [550 U.S. 544, 565] n.10 (2007). Given such a complaint, 'a defendant seeking to respond to plaintiff's conclusory allegations . . . would have little idea where to begin.' *Id.*").

(v) Plaintiff may not name an individual as a defendant based solely on supervisory position. *See Mitchell v. Maynard*, 80 F.2d 1433, 1441 (10th Cir. 1996) (stating supervisory status alone does not support § 1983 liability).

(vi) Grievance denial alone with no connection to "violation of constitutional rights alleged by plaintiff, does not establish personal participation under § 1983." *Gallagher v. Shelton*, 587 F.3d 1063, 1069 (10th Cir. 2009).

(vii) "No action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions under . . . Federal law, by a prisoner confined in any jail, prison, or other correctional facility until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted." 42 U.S.C.S. § 1997e(a) (2024). However, Plaintiff need

not include grievance details in the complaint. Exhaustion of administrative remedies is an affirmative defense that must be raised by defendants. *Jones v. Bock*, 549 U.S. 199, 216 (2007).

- **Respondeat superior**

The Supreme Court holds that, in asserting a § 1983 claim against a government agent in their individual capacity, "a plaintiff must plead that each Government-official defendant, through the official's own individual actions, has violated the Constitution." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 676 (2009). Consequently, there is no respondeat superior liability under § 1983. *See Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 676 ("Because vicarious liability is inapplicable to *Bivens* and § 1983 suits, a plaintiff must plead that each Government-official defendant, through the official's own individual actions, has violated the Constitution."); *Bd. of Cty. Comm'rs v. Brown*, 520 U.S. 397, 403 (1997). Entities may not be held liable on the sole ground of an employer-employee relationship with a claimed tortfeasor. *See Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs. of N.Y.*, 436 U.S. 658, 689 (1978). Supervisors are considered liable for their own unconstitutional or illegal policies only, and not for employees' tortious acts. *See Barney v. Pulsipher*, 143 F.3d 1299, 1307-08 (10th Cir. 1998).

- **Failure to protect**

Here are the standards governing this type of claim:

The Eighth Amendment imposes a duty on prison officials to provide humane conditions of confinement, including "reasonable measures to guarantee the safety of the inmates." *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 832 (1994) (quotations omitted). This obligation includes a duty "to protect prisoners from violence at the hands of other prisoners." *Id.* at 833 (quotations omitted). "To prevail on a failure to protect claim, an inmate must show (1) that the conditions of his incarceration present[ed] an objective substantial risk of serious harm and (2) prison officials had subjective knowledge of the risk of harm." *Requena v. Roberts*,

893 F.3d 1195, 1214 (10th Cir. 2018) (quotations omitted). To satisfy the second prong, the inmate must show that the prison official was deliberately indifferent to the inmate's health or safety. *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 834. A prison official will not be liable unless he "knows of and disregards an excessive risk to inmate health or safety; the official must both be aware of facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm exists, and he must also draw the inference." *Id.* at 837.

Pittman v. Kahn, No. 23-1153, 2024 U.S. App. LEXIS 3043, at *3-4 (10th Cir. Feb. 9, 2024) (unpublished).

• Inadequate medical treatment

The Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment requires prison officials to "provide humane conditions of confinement" including "adequate . . . medical care." *Craig v. Eberly*, 164 F.3d 490, 495 (10th Cir. 1998)) (quoting *Barney v. Pulsipher*, 143 F.3d 1299, 1310 (10th Cir. 1998)). To state a cognizable claim under the Eighth Amendment for failure to provide proper medical care, "a prisoner must allege acts or omissions *sufficiently harmful* to evidence deliberate indifference to serious medical needs." *Olson v. Stotts*, 9 F.3d 1475, 1477 (10th Cir. 1993) (emphasis in original) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976)).

Any Eighth Amendment claim must be evaluated under objective and subjective prongs: (1) "Was the deprivation sufficiently serious?" And, if so, (2) "Did the officials act with a sufficiently culpable state of mind?" *Wilson v. Seiter*, 501 U.S. 294, 298 (1991).

Under the objective prong, a medical need is "sufficiently serious . . . if it is one that has been diagnosed by a physician as mandating treatment or one that is so obvious that even a lay person would easily recognize the necessity for a doctor's attention." *Sealock*, 218 F.3d at 1209 (citations & quotation marks omitted).

The subjective component requires the plaintiff to show that prison officials were consciously aware that the prisoner faced a substantial risk of harm and wantonly disregarded the risk "by failing to take reasonable measures to abate it." *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 847 (1994). "[T]he 'inadvertent failure to provide adequate medical care' tantamount to negligence does not satisfy the deliberate indifference standard." *Sparks v. Singh*, 690 F. App'x 598, 604 (10th Cir. 2017) (unpublished) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 105–06 (1976)). Furthermore, "a prisoner who merely disagrees with a diagnosis or a prescribed course of treatment does not state a constitutional violation." *Perkins v. Kan. Dep't of Corrs.*, 165 F.3d 803, 811 10th Cir. 1999); *see also Gee v. Pacheco*, 627 F.3d 1178, 1192 (10th Cir. 2010) ("Disagreement with a doctor's particular method of treatment, without more, does not rise to the level of an Eighth Amendment violation.").

The elements of a cause of action for other physical mistreatment are similar.

- **Classification**

An inmate's transfer to different housing or adjustment of privileges (e.g., prison employment) does not necessarily mean that prison administrators were deliberately indifferent to conditions with substantial risk of serious harm. *See Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994); *see also Allen v. Raemisch*, 603 F. App'x 682, 684 (10th Cir. 2015) (unpublished) ("[P]risoners do not have a protected liberty or property interest in keeping a specific prison job . . ."). Nor is it, per se, "atypical [of] ... the ordinary incidents of prison life." *See Adams v. Negron*, 94 F. App'x 676, 678 (10th Cir. 2004) (quoting *Sandin v. Conner*, 515 U.S. 472, 484 (1995) (unpublished) (holding placement in highly structured, restrictive prison housing not deliberate indifference)).

ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows:

(1) Plaintiff must within thirty days cure the Complaint's deficiencies noted above by filing a document entitled, "Amended Complaint," that does not refer to or include any other document. (ECF No. 4.)

(2) The Clerk's Office shall mail Plaintiff the Pro Se Litigant Guide with a blank-form civil-rights complaint which Plaintiff must use to pursue an amended complaint.

(3) If Plaintiff fails to timely cure the above deficiencies according to this Order's instructions, this action will be dismissed without further notice.

(4) The amended complaint shall not include any claims outside the dates and allegations of transactions and events contained in the Complaint, filed October 12, 2023, (ECF No. 4). The Court will not address any such new claims or outside allegations, which will be dismissed. If Plaintiff wishes to raise other claims and allegations, Plaintiff may do so only in a new complaint in a new case. If an amended complaint is filed, the Court will screen each claim and defendant for dismissal or an order effecting service upon valid defendants who are affirmatively linked to valid claims.

(5) Plaintiff shall not try to serve an amended complaint on any defendants; instead, the Court will perform its screening function and determine itself whether the amended complaint warrants service or dismissal (in part or in full). No motion for service of process is needed. *See* 28 U.S.C.S. § 1915(d) (2024) ("The officers of the court shall issue and serve all process, and perform all duties in [*in forma pauperis*] cases.").

(6) Plaintiff must tell the Court of any address change and timely comply with Court orders. *See* D. Utah Civ. R. 83-1.6(b) ("An unrepresented party must immediately notify the Clerk's Office in writing of any name, mailing address, or email address changes."). Failure to do so may result in this action's dismissal for failure to prosecute. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 41(b) ("If the plaintiff fails to prosecute or to comply with these rules or a court order, a defendant may move to dismiss the action or any claim against it. Unless the dismissal order states otherwise, a dismissal under this subdivision (b) and any dismissal not under this rule--except one for lack of jurisdiction, improper venue, or failure to join a party under Rule 19--operates as an adjudication on the merits.").

(7) Extensions of time are disfavored, though reasonable extensions may be granted. Any motion for time extension must be filed no later than **fourteen days** before the deadline to be extended.

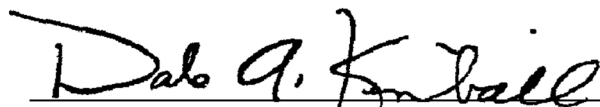
(8) No direct communication is to take place with any judge. All relevant information, letters, documents, and papers, labeled with case number, are to be directed to the court clerk.

(9) Plaintiff must observe this District of Utah local rule: "A party proceeding without an attorney (unrepresented party or *pro se* party) is obligated to comply with: (1) the Federal Rules

of Civil Procedure; (2) these Local Rules of Practice; (3) the Utah Standards of Professionalism and Civility; and (4) other laws and rules relevant to the action." DUCivR 83-1.6(a).

DATED this 8th day of May, 2024.

BY THE COURT:



JUDGE DALE A. KIMBALL
United States District Court "