

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH,  
CENTRAL DIVISION

John R., individually and on behalf of W.R., a minor v. HMO  
Louisiana Inc. and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana

John R. · No. 2:26-cv-00066 · Decided March 18, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Utah granted John R. and his minor son W.R. leave to proceed using initials in an ERISA action challenging the denial of insurance coverage for the minor’s care. The court found that the case involved highly sensitive and personal health information, ordered the notice containing the plaintiffs’ full names to remain sealed, and allowed objections to the pseudonymous proceeding within seven days of a party’s appearance.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the District of Utah, Central Division                                                                    |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Daphne A. Oberg                                                                                                                            |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the District of Utah, Central Division                                                                    |
| DECIDED               | March 18, 2026                                                                                                                             |
| DOCKET                | 2:26-cv-00066                                                                                                                              |
| DISPOSITION           | other                                                                                                                                      |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | Plaintiffs moved for leave to proceed under initials and pseudonymously after filing the action using initials and a partial name.         |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | The court exercised discretion by weighing the parties' privacy interests against the public's interest in access to judicial proceedings. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | Unpublished memorandum decision and order; precedential status not stated.                                                                 |
| PARTIES               | John R., individually and on behalf of W.R., a minor v. HMO<br>Louisiana Inc., Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana                         |

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- insurance
- health law
- medical records privacy
- pleadings

## PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

ERISA

Insurance benefits

Health law

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiffs should be permitted to proceed under initials and pseudonymously because the action involves a minor's highly sensitive and personal health information.

## HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiffs may proceed under initials and pseudonymously because the case involves highly sensitive and personal health information concerning a minor, and the privacy interests supporting anonymity outweigh the limited public interest in the parties' identities.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“Additionally, a party may proceed anonymously in “exceptional cases involving matters of a highly sensitive and personal nature, real danger of physical harm, or where the injury litigated against would be incurred as a result of the disclosure of the [party’s] identity.””*

*“Because this case involves W.R.’s highly sensitive and personal health information, Plaintiffs’ motion is granted.”*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

John R. and his minor son, W.R., brought an ERISA action challenging the denial of insurance benefits for care W.R. received as a minor. The complaint contained sensitive information concerning W.R.'s personal circumstances and serious mental-health issues. Disclosure of John R.'s identity would effectively reveal W.R.'s identity.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

John R. and his minor son, W.R., filed an ERISA action alleging that Defendants denied insurance coverage for care received by W.R. The court ordered Plaintiffs to comply with the local rules governing anonymous litigation. Plaintiffs filed a motion for leave to proceed anonymously and a sealed notice containing their full names; the court granted the motion.

## DISPOSITION

other

## CASES CITED

- Nat’l Commodity & Barter Ass’n v. Gibbs, 886 F.2d 1240, 1245 (10th Cir. 1989)
- Femedeer v. Haun, 227 F.3d 1244, 1246 (10th Cir. 2000)
- Doe v. Frank, 951 F.2d 320, 324 (11th Cir. 1992)

- S.E.S. v. Galena Unified Sch. Dist. No. 499, No. 18-2042, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 116054, at \*4 (D. Kan. July 12, 2018)

## OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH CENTRAL DIVISION  
JOHN R., individually and on behalf of MEMORANDUM DECISION AND W.R., a minor,  
ORDER GRANTING PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR LEAVE TO PROCEED Plaintiffs,  
ANONYMOUSLY (DOC. NO. 3) v. HMO LOUISIANA INC; and BLUE CROSS Case No. 2:26-  
cv-00066 BLUE SHIELD OF LOUISIANA, Magistrate Judge Daphne A. Oberg Defendants.

John R. and his son, W.R., brought this action alleging Defendants violated the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) by denying insurance coverage for care W.R. received as a minor.<sup>2</sup> Because Plaintiffs filed this case using only initials and a partial name, the court ordered them to file a motion for leave to proceed under initials in compliance with the local rules.<sup>3</sup> Plaintiffs filed a motion to proceed under initials<sup>4</sup> and a sealed notice containing their full names.<sup>5</sup> Because this case involves W.R.'s highly sensitive and personal health information, Plaintiffs' motion 1 29 U.S.C. § 1001 et seq.

2 (See Compl., Doc. No. 1.) 3 (See Order to Show Cause, Doc. No. 2); DUCivR 10-2. 4 (Pls.' Mot. for Leave to Proceed Anonymously, Doc. No. 3.) 5 (Doc. No. 6.) is granted. Any party who objects to Plaintiffs proceeding under initials may file a motion to vacate this order within seven days of the party's appearance in this case.<sup>6</sup> LEGAL STANDARDS Under Rule 10 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, "[t]he title of the complaint must name all the parties."<sup>7</sup> "Absent permission by the district court to proceed anonymously,... the federal courts lack jurisdiction over the unnamed parties, as a case has not been commenced with respect to them."<sup>8</sup> However, Rule 5.2 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provides that minors may be named using initials unless the court orders otherwise.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, a party may proceed anonymously in "exceptional cases involving matters of a highly sensitive and personal nature, real danger of physical harm, or where the injury litigated against would be incurred as a result of the disclosure of the [party's] identity."<sup>10</sup> In deciding whether to permit anonymity, courts exercise discretion in weighing these privacy interests against the public's interest in access to legal proceedings.<sup>11</sup> 6 See DUCivR 10-2(d).

7 Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(a); see also Fed. R. Civ. P. 17(a) (requiring an action to "be prosecuted in the name of the real party in interest"). 8 Nat'l Commodity & Barter Ass'n v. Gibbs, 886 F.2d 1240, 1245 (10th Cir. 1989). 9 Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2(a)(3). 10 Femedeer v. Haun, 227 F.3d 1244, 1246 (10th Cir. 2000) (quoting Doe v. Frank, 951 F.2d 320, 324 (11th Cir.

1992)). 11 See id. ANALYSIS Where this case involves a minor child's highly sensitive and personal health information, the motion is granted. Plaintiffs' complaint contains sensitive details about W.R.'s personal circumstances and the serious mental health issues W.R. confronted as a

minor.<sup>12</sup> Because this information is “of a highly sensitive and personal nature,” W.R. has a strong interest in the protection of W.R.’s identity.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, John R.’s anonymity is warranted where disclosure of his full name would reveal W.R.’s identity.<sup>14</sup> Further, public interest in the identities of the parties in this proceeding appears limited.

This case does not involve the sorts of important public issues giving rise to common interest—such as cases “attacking the constitutionality of popularly enacted legislation.”<sup>15</sup> Instead, this case involves private individuals challenging the denial of insurance benefits for care received by a minor. Any public interest in this case is limited (at least at this time) to the precedential or persuasive value of the rulings in the case.

The use of pseudonyms does not diminish this value. <sup>12</sup> (See generally Compl., Doc. No. 1.) <sup>13</sup> Femedeer, 227 F.3d at 1246 (quoting Frank, 951 F.2d at 324). <sup>14</sup> See S.E.S. v. Galena Unified Sch. Dist. No. 499, No. 18-2042, 2018 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 116054, at \*4 (D. Kan. July 12, 2018) (unpublished) (noting a child “and his parents share common privacy interests based on their inseparable relationship,” because disclosure of a parent’s identity would effectively disclose the child’s identity).

<sup>15</sup> See Femedeer, 227 F.3d at 1246. CONCLUSION Where this case implicates matters of a highly sensitive and personal nature regarding care received by a minor, the motion’® is granted. Plaintiffs may proceed pseudonymously in this action. Plaintiffs shall provide a copy of the notice containing their full names to Defendants, and that filing shall remain under seal unless otherwise ordered.

Any party who objects to Plaintiffs proceeding under initials may file a motion to vacate this order within seven days of the party’s appearance in this case. ” DATED this 18th day of March, 2026. BY THE COURT: United States Magistrate Judge 16 (Doc. No. 3.) <sup>17</sup> See DUCivR 10-2(d).