

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Ellis-Sanders v. Guardian Piazza D’Oro LLC

Ellis-Sanders · No. 25-cv-1379-JO-DDL · Decided June 9, 2025

SUMMARY

The court partially denied a pro se plaintiff’s ex parte motion to seal the entire case, applying the compelling-reasons standard and the presumption of public access to court records. The court permitted sealing of the minor daughter’s full name, specified medical records, and specified email addresses, ordered redacted resubmissions, and directed the Clerk to restrict access to current filings.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jinsook Ohta
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
DECIDED	June 9, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-1379-JO-DDL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved ex parte to seal the entire case based on the inclusion of medical, disability, and accommodation-related information involving herself and her minor daughter.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the compelling-reasons standard and the strong presumption of public access to court records, requiring any sealing request to be narrowly tailored.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district-court order; precedential status unknown
PARTIES	Oudree Ellis-Sanders v. Guardian Piazza D’Oro LLC, Brisco, Other defendants

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- public records
- open government
- ada / disability
- section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

- Civil procedure
- Civil rights
- Disability law
- Court records and sealing

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiff established compelling reasons sufficient to seal the entire case and all related filings.
2. Whether discrete portions of the filings, including a minor's full name, medical records, and email addresses, should be sealed or redacted.
3. What redaction and access restrictions were necessary to protect sensitive information while preserving public access to court records.

HOLDINGS

1. The court denied plaintiff's request to seal the entire case because generalized privacy concerns about medical conditions did not overcome the strong presumption of public access to court records.
2. The court granted limited sealing for the minor daughter's full name, medical records filed as Exhibit C to the TRO motion, and specified email addresses contained in Exhibits B and D to the TRO motion and Exhibit F to the complaint.
3. The court denied sealing of the remaining documents, including court filings from the unlawful detainer and appellate proceedings and the underlying lease agreement, because plaintiff did not satisfy the compelling-reasons standard or narrowly tailor the request.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The mere fact that the production of records may lead to a litigant's embarrassment, incrimination, or exposure to further litigation will not, without more, compel the court to seal its records." (1)

"Plaintiff fails to overcome the strong presumption by establishing that the disclosure of this information would either (1) become a vehicle for improper purposes or (2) amount to more than the potential embarrassment, incrimination, or exposure to further litigation to justify sealing." (1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that defendants violated 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and various California statutes by disregarding her disabilities and initiating an unlawful detainer action. Her filings included allegations concerning her and her minor daughter's medical conditions and disabilities, as well as medical records, email addresses, and the minor's full name. She sought to seal the entire case and numerous related filings.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed an action alleging civil-rights and disability-law violations arising from an unlawful detainer action. She then sought to seal the entire case and related filings. The court denied the request in part, granted limited sealing for specified sensitive information, ordered redactions and resubmissions, and restricted access to current filings.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

No remand. Plaintiff was ordered to resubmit her complaint, TRO motion, motion to seal, motion for electronic access, and motion for appointment of counsel using only the minor's initials by June 27, 2025; redact the minor's full name where initials could not be substituted; and redact specified email addresses. The Clerk was directed to restrict access to all current filings so that only the court and case participants could access them.

CASES CITED

- Kamakana v. City & Cnty. of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1179 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Harrell v. California Forensic Med. Grp., Inc., No. 2:15-CV-00579 KJN P, 2015 WL 1405567, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 26, 2015)
- Rock v. McHugh, 819 F. Supp. 2d 456, 476 (D. Md. 2011)
- A.C. v. City of Santa Clara, No. 13-CV-03276-HSG, 2015 WL 4076364, at *2 (N.D. Cal. July 2, 2015)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 OUDREE ELLIS-SANDERS, et al, Case No.: 25-cv-1379-JO-DDL 12
Plaintiffs, ORDER ON PLAINTIFF'S EX 13 v. PARTE MOTION TO SEAL CASE 14
GUARDIAN PIAZZA D'ORO LLC, et al, 15 Defendants. 16 17 18 Pro se Plaintiff Oudree Ellis-
Sanders filed a motion requesting to seal her entire case 19 on the grounds that her complaint,
motion for temporary restraining order ("TRO"), and 20 all documents pertaining to this case
contains sensitive and private information related to 21 Plaintiff and her minor daughter's medical
records, disabilities, and requests for disability 22 accommodations.

This request is DENIED IN PART as overbroad. 23 The Court concludes Plaintiff has not met the
compelling reasons standard to seal 24 this entire case because her generalized privacy concerns
about her medical conditions do 25 not overcome the strong presumption in favor of the public's
right to access court 26 records. Kamakana v. City & Cnty. of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1179 (9th
Cir.

2006) 27 ("The mere fact that the production of records may lead to a litigant's embarrassment, 28
incrimination, or exposure to further litigation will not, without more, compel the court to 1 seal
its records.") (internal citations omitted). 2 Plaintiff's complaint and request for temporary
restraining order allege that 3 Defendants violated her civil rights pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983,
Titles II and III of the 4 American with Disabilities Act, California Unruh Act, the Fair Housing
Act, and California 5 Fair Employment and Housing Act when they ignored her disabilities and
wrongly initiated 6 an unlawful detainer action against Plaintiff.

See Dkt. 1, Compl. Plaintiff's factual 7 allegations about her medical conditions and disabilities are central to whether Plaintiff is 8 entitled to protection under these statutes and whether Defendants are liable for these 9 alleged violations. These factual allegations are therefore essential to the public's ability to 10 follow and understand Plaintiff's claims and the judicial process that unfolds in this 11 case.

Harrell v. California Forensic Med. Grp., Inc., No. 2:15-CV-00579 KJN P, 2015 12 WL 1405567, at *1 (E.D. Cal. Mar. 26, 2015) (a complaint "is at the heart of the interest 13 in ensuring the public's understanding of the judicial process.") (quoting Kamakana, 447 14 F.3d at 1179); see Rock v. McHugh, 819 F.Supp.2d 456, 476 (D.Md.2011) (a sealing order 15 that "would effectively seal the entire case"... "infringe[s] too extensively on the public 16 right to access court records.") Plaintiff fails to overcome the strong presumption by 17 establishing that the disclosure of this information would either (1) become a vehicle for 18 improper purposes or (2) amount to more than the potential embarrassment, incrimination, 19 or exposure to further litigation to justify sealing.

Kamakana, 447 F.3d at 1179. 20 However, the Court does find that discrete portions of Plaintiff's filings do meet the 21 compelling reasons standard, and GRANTS IN PART the sealing of (1) Plaintiff's minor 22 daughter's full name; (2) Plaintiff and her minor daughter's medical records filed as Exhibit 23 C filed in support of Plaintiff's TRO motion; and (3) the email addresses of Plaintiff, 24 Defendant Brisco, and third parties contained in Exhibit B and D filed in support of 25 Plaintiff's TRO motion and Exhibit F of Plaintiff's complaint.

Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2(a)(3) 26 ("Unless the court orders otherwise, in an electronic or paper filing with the court that 27 contains... the name of an individual known to be a minor..., a party or nonparty making 28 the filing may include only... the minor's initials[.]"); A.C. v. City of Santa Clara, No. 1 13-CV-03276-HSG, 2015 WL 4076364, at *2 (N.D. Cal. July 2, 2015) (sealing medical 2 ||records of a minor when the records contained sensitive information regarding minor's 3 ||mental health and involvement in juvenile court proceedings).

4 Finally, the Court DENIES the sealing of the remaining documents Plaintiff wishes 5 ||to seal because she has not demonstrated they meet the compelling reasons standard, nor 6 || narrowly tailored this request to remove from public viewing only materials that should be 7 protected.

For example, Plaintiff requests to seal other court orders and filings from her 8 ||San Diego Superior Court unlawful detainer action, filings she submitted in California 9 || Court of Appeals case, and her lease agreement for the underlying property in dispute. 10 The Court ORDERS Plaintiff to resubmit her complaint, motion for TRO, motion to 11 ||seal, motion for electronic access, and motion for appointment of counsel using only the 12 ||minor's initials, including in the case caption by June 27, 2025.

For any exhibit where 13 Plaintiff cannot change her minor daughter's full name to initials (for example, police 14 /report submitted as Exhibit D to complaint and Exhibit H to TRO motion, or in lease 15 }agreement submitted as Exhibit A to complaint and Exhibit E to TRO motion), Plaintiff 16 ||may redact or black out the minor's full name. It is further ORDERED that all future 17 || filings in this case will only use the minor's initials in the case caption.

18 Plaintiff must also resubmit Exhibit B and D filed in support of Plaintiff's TRO 19 ||motion and Exhibit F of Plaintiff's complaint with redactions to the email addresses of 20 || Plaintiff, Defendant Brisco, and third parties, by June 27, 2025. 21 The Court directs the Clerk of Court to RESTRICT all current filings so that only 22 Court and case participants can access these filings.

23 IT IS SO ORDERED. 24 || Dated: June 9, 2025 25 26 Ho orgbfe Tinsook Ohta 27 United States District Judge 28