

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Felix v. Clandenin

Felix · No. 1:23-cv-00839-KES-BAM (PC) · Decided February 25, 2025

SUMMARY

The document is findings and recommendations by a United States Magistrate Judge in a § 1983 action brought by a civil detainee against officials of Coalinga State Hospital. The court recommends dismissal with prejudice for failure to state a claim, failure to obey court orders, and failure to prosecute, based on the plaintiff’s failure to file an amended complaint or otherwise communicate with the court.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Barbara A. McAuliffe
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	February 25, 2025
DOCKET	1:23-cv-00839-KES-BAM (PC)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Findings and recommendations by a magistrate judge recommending dismissal with prejudice of a pro se civil-rights action brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court accepts well-pleaded allegations as true but requires a short and plain statement showing entitlement to relief and factual allegations sufficient to make liability plausible. For dismissal based on failure to prosecute or obey court orders, the court considers the five-factor Ninth Circuit test addressing expeditious resolution, docket management, prejudice, disposition on the merits, and availability of less drastic sanctions.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Scott Emerson Felix v. Clandenin, et al.

TOPICS

section 1983

due process

injunctions

pleadings

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

constitutional law

prisoner and civil detainee rights

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment substantive due process claim based on the planned installation of Norix furniture at a civil detention facility.
2. Whether Plaintiff was entitled to prospective injunctive or declaratory relief.
3. Whether dismissal with prejudice was appropriate for failure to obey court orders and failure to prosecute after Plaintiff failed to file an amended complaint despite repeated extensions and warnings.

HOLDINGS

1. The allegations that replacement furniture would cause discomfort, reduce storage space, and reduce privacy did not plausibly show punishment or a substantial risk of serious harm, and therefore did not state a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claim.
2. Plaintiff was not entitled to injunctive relief because he failed to show a real and immediate direct injury or a likelihood of future injury from the furniture replacement.
3. Dismissal with prejudice was the appropriate sanction because Plaintiff failed to file an amended complaint after repeated extensions and explicit warnings, and the relevant dismissal factors supported dismissal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Punitive conditions of confinement are those that are either expressly intended to punish or those that are excessive in relation to the alternative purpose [for confinement].”” (II.B.2)

“In determining whether to dismiss an action, the Court must consider several factors: (1) the public’s interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) the Court’s need to manage its docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to the defendants; (4) the public policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits; and (5) the availability of less drastic sanctions.” (III.B)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, a civil detainee at Coalinga State Hospital, alleged that officials planned to replace padded furniture with hard plastic Norix anti-ligature furniture. He claimed the replacement would reduce comfort, storage space, and privacy, and alleged that the restrictions were punitive and excessive under the Fourteenth Amendment. Plaintiff sued three state officials in their official capacities and sought prospective injunctive and declaratory relief, but he did not amend his complaint after receiving leave and repeated extensions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a § 1983 action concerning the planned replacement of furniture at Coalinga State Hospital. The court screened the complaint and granted leave to amend, warning that failure to amend or otherwise communicate could result in dismissal. After multiple extensions, Plaintiff failed to file an amended complaint or notice of voluntary dismissal by the February 5, 2025 deadline. The magistrate judge recommended dismissal with prejudice for failure to state a claim, failure to obey court orders, and failure to prosecute, subject to the parties' fourteen-day objection period.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Page v. Torrey, 201 F.3d 1136, 1140 (9th Cir. 2000)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- Doe I v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 572 F.3d 677, 681 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Moss v. U.S. Secret Service, 572 F.3d 962, 969 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Hafer v. Melo, 502 U.S. 21, 25 (1991)
- Holley v. California Department of Corrections, 599 F.3d 1108, 1111 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Kentucky v. Graham, 473 U.S. 159, 165–66 (1985)
- Will v. Michigan Department of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 92 (1989)
- Hartmann v. California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, 707 F.3d 1114, 1127 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Ex Parte Young, 209 U.S. 123, 157 (1908)
- Pouncil v. Tilton, 704 F.3d 568, 576 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Jones v. Blanas, 393 F.3d 918, 932 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Demery v. Arpaio, 378 F.3d 1020, 1028 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Bell v. Wolfish, 441 U.S. 520, 538 (1979)
- Youngberg v. Romeo, 457 U.S. 307, 312 n.11, 315, 320–24 (1982)
- Castro v. County of Los Angeles, 833 F.3d 1060, 1071 (9th Cir. 2016) (en banc)
- Kingsley v. Hendrickson, 576 U.S. 389 (2015)
- Jones v. City of Los Angeles, 444 F.3d 1118, 1126 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Committee of Central American Refugees v. I.N.S., 795 F.2d 1434, 1441 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Martin v. International Olympic Committee, 740 F.2d 670, 675 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Eccles v. Peoples Bank of Lakewood Village, 333 U.S. 426, 431 (1948)
- United States v. Washington, 759 F.2d 1353, 1357 (9th Cir. 1985)
- Thompson v. Housing Authority, 782 F.2d 829, 831 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Ghazali v. Moran, 46 F.3d 52, 53–54 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Ferdik v. Bonzelet, 963 F.2d 1258, 1260–61, 1262 (9th Cir. 1992)

- *Malone v. U.S. Postal Service*, 833 F.2d 128, 130–33 (9th Cir. 1987)
- *Henderson v. Duncan*, 779 F.2d 1421, 1423–24 (9th Cir. 1986)
- *Carey v. King*, 856 F.2d 1439, 1440 (9th Cir. 1988)
- *Anderson v. Air West*, 542 F.2d 522, 524 (9th Cir. 1976)
- *Pagtalunan v. Galaza*, 291 F.3d 639, 643 (9th Cir. 2002)
- *In re Phenylpropanolamine (PPA) Products Liability Litigation*, 460 F.3d 1217, 1228 (9th Cir. 2006)
- *Wilkerson v. Wheeler*, 772 F.3d 834, 838–39 (9th Cir. 2014)
- *Baxter v. Sullivan*, 923 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1991)

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