

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA

Keandre Arnold v. Marts, et al.

Arnold · No. 1:25-cv-01390-JRO-MG · Decided April 29, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana screens Keandre Arnold’s prisoner civil rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court dismisses claims against Mr. Lawson and Dr. Gaza, as well as certain claims concerning the initial suicide attempt, but allows Eighth Amendment excessive-force and deliberate-indifference claims to proceed against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy and Dr. Corvetta. The court directs service of process and terminates Mr. Lawson and Dr. Gaza as defendants.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Ju R. Olson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana
DECIDED	April 29, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-01390-JRO-MG
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Screening of a prisoner civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A before service of process.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must dismiss claims that are frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court applies the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) plausibility standard, accepts factual allegations as true at the pleading stage, and construes pro se pleadings liberally.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Keandre Arnold v. Sgt. Marts, Sgt. Fish, Sgt. Surguy, Dr. Corvetta, Mr. Lawson, Dr. Gaza, Dr. Lawson

TOPICS

section 1983

prisoners rights

cruel and unusual punishment

pleadings

service of process

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner litigation

constitutional torts

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a plausible Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy.
2. Whether the complaint stated a plausible Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference-to-medical-needs claim against Sgts. Marts, Fish, Surguy, and Dr. Corvetta.
3. Whether the complaint stated a claim against defendants against whom Arnold alleged no personal involvement or no facts showing actual knowledge of a substantial risk of serious harm.
4. Whether claims concerning the doctors' response to Arnold's first hanging attempt stated deliberate indifference rather than medical negligence.

HOLDINGS

1. A § 1983 claim must be dismissed at screening when the complaint contains no factual allegations connecting the defendant to the alleged constitutional deprivation. The claim against Mr. Lawson was dismissed.
2. To state an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim, a prisoner must plausibly allege that the official actually knew of a substantial risk of serious harm and disregarded that risk by failing to take reasonable measures to stop it.
3. The claims against Dr. Gaza and Dr. Corvetta concerning Arnold's first attempted hanging with bed strings were dismissed because the allegations showed that the doctors responded by maintaining suicide-watch status and did not plausibly establish actual knowledge of an additional substantial risk beyond the incident to which they responded.
4. The claims against Dr. Gaza were dismissed because Arnold did not allege that Dr. Gaza was notified of the second hanging attempt or any other suicide attempt before Dr. Corvetta removed suicide watch.
5. The Eighth Amendment excessive-force claims against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy and the Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference-to-medical-needs claims against Sgts. Marts, Fish, Surguy, and Dr. Corvetta may proceed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“When screening a complaint, the Court must dismiss any portion that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim for relief, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.” (I. Screening Standard)

“The claims that shall proceed are the following: • Eighth Amendment excessive force claims against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy; and • Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference to medical need claims against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy, and Dr. Corvetta.” (III. Discussion of Claims)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Arnold, a prisoner at Pendleton Correctional Facility, alleged that he attempted suicide on July 7, 2023. He alleged that correctional officers used force against him, failed to report the suicide attempt or obtain medical care, and later used chemical agent after another hanging attempt. He further alleged that medical personnel failed to maintain adequate suicide precautions, including that Dr. Corvetta later removed all suicide-prevention orders despite continued self-harm.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Arnold filed a prisoner civil-rights complaint alleging Eighth Amendment violations arising from suicide attempts, alleged excessive force, and alleged failures to provide medical care at Pendleton Correctional Facility. The court screened the complaint before service, dismissed claims against Mr. Lawson and Dr. Gaza and claims concerning the doctors' response to Arnold's first hanging attempt, allowed specified excessive-force and deliberate-indifference claims to proceed, and directed service of process.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Schillinger v. Kiley, 954 F.3d 990, 993 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Cesal v. Moats, 851 F.3d 714, 720 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Lisby v. Henderson, 74 F.4th 470, 472 (7th Cir. 2023)
- Colbert v. City of Chicago, 851 F.3d 649, 657 (7th Cir. 2017)
- LaBrec v. Walker, 948 F.3d 836, 841 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Santiago v. Walls, 599 F.3d 749, 756, 758-59 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Dale v. Poston, 548 F.3d 563, 569 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Sinn v. Lemmon, 911 F.3d 412, 419 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Gevas v. McLaughlin, 798 F.3d 475, 480 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 837 (1994)
- Borello v. Allison, 446 F.3d 742, 747 (7th Cir. 2006)

OPINION

ARNOLD

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA

INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

KEANDRE ARNOLD,)

) Plaintiff,)) v.) No. 1:25-cv-01390-JRO-MG) MARTS, et al.,)) Defendants.)

ORDER SCREENING COMPLAINT AND DIRECTING FURTHER
PROCEEDINGS

Plaintiff Keandre Arnold is a prisoner currently incarcerated at Pendleton Correctional Facility (“Pendleton”) where the events that gave rise to his complaint took place. In this civil rights action, Arnold alleges defendants violated his Eighth Amendment rights. As an initial matter, Arnold’s motion for status regarding the filing fee, dkt.

[8], and motion to reconsider, dkt. [15], are granted to the extent that the filing fee has been resolved in this matter. Dkt. 20. Because the plaintiff is a “prisoner,” this Court must screen the complaint before service on the defendants. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a), (c).

I. SCREENING STANDARD

When screening a complaint, the Court must dismiss any portion that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim for relief, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b). To determine whether the complaint states a claim, the Court applies the same standard as when addressing a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). See *Schillinger v. Kiley*, 954 F.3d 990, 993 (7th Cir. 2020). Under that standard, a complaint must include “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570

(2007). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). The Court construes pro se complaints liberally and holds them to a “less stringent standard than pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Cesal v. Moats*, 851 F.3d 714, 720 (7th Cir. 2017).

II. THE COMPLAINT

Arnold’s factual allegations are accepted as true at the pleading stage. See *Lisby v. Henderson*, 74 F.4th 470, 472 (7th Cir. 2023). Arnold names six individuals as defendants in his complaint: (1) Sgt. Marts, (2) Sgt. Fish, (3) Sgt. Surguy, (4) Dr. Corvetta, (5) Mr. Lawson, and (6) Dr. Lawson. Dkt. 1 at 1. In his complaint, Arnold alleges that on July 7, 2023, he attempted suicide. *Id.* at 2. Instead of following protocol, Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy, “took matters into their own hands.” *Id.* Sgt. Marts attempted to wake up Arnold by dropping his weight and knee into Arnold’s neck, choking him. *Id.* When Arnold did not awaken, Sgt. Marts shifted his weight into Arnold’s head, smashing it into the concrete. *Id.* Arnold’s slowly woke up and one of the Sgts. stated “told ya the ‘George Floyd’ trick works everytime.” *Id.* Then Sgt. Marts used his boot to stand on Arnold’s long hair restricting him from moving his head while Sgt. Fish aggressively pulled Arnold’s limp body in the opposite direction. *Id.* This ripped Arnold’s hair out of his scalp. *Id.* Arnold woke up and yelled for medical. *Id.* Sgts. Marts and Fish dragged Arnold’s naked body through the prison, ramming his head into every door on the way. *Id.* Sgts. Marts and Fish failed to report the suicide

attempt or seek medical care for Arnold. *Id.* Once back in his cell, Arnold made his first alleged attempt to hang himself using bed strings. *Id.* Main control witnessed and called for Dr. Gaza and Dr. Corvetta to upgrade Arnold's level of suicide watch, which they did not. *Id.* at 2-

3. Later, Arnold tried a second time to use bed strings to hang himself and became semi unconscious from choking himself. *Id.* at 3. Main control summoned Sgt. Surguy who sprayed chemical agent into Arnold's food slot. *Id.* When Arnold woke up, Sgt. Surguy sprayed him again. *Id.* Arnold fell and injured himself during the altercation. *Id.* Sgt. Surguy failed to report the second bed string hanging attempt or seek medical and issued a conduct report instead. *Id.* After this incident, Dr. Corvetta lifted all suicide prevention orders and allowed Arnold to be free even though he continued to self harm, including stabbing himself in the neck. *Id.* Arnold seeks compensatory and punitive damages as well as injunctive relief.

III. DISCUSSION OF CLAIMS

As an initial matter, while Arnold named Mr. Lawson as a defendant, he has failed to include any factual allegations against him. “[I]ndividual liability under § 1983 . . . requires personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation.” *Colbert v. City of Chicago*, 851 F.3d 649, 657 (7th Cir. 2017) (internal quotation omitted). “The plaintiff must demonstrate a causal connection between (1) the sued officials and (2) the alleged misconduct.” *Id.* Arnold's complaint fails to state any factual allegations against Mr. Lawson. Accordingly, any claim against him is dismissed. Under the Eighth Amendment, inmates cannot prove deliberate indifference without evidence that a prison official actually knew the inmate was in danger of serious injury. *LaBrec v. Walker*, 948 F.3d 836, 841 (7th Cir. 2020); *Santiago v. Walls*, 599 F.3d 749, 756, 758–59 (7th Cir. 2010); *Dale v. Poston*, 548 F.3d 563, 569 (7th Cir. 2008). Unlike the seriousness of the injury itself, which is judged objectively, *LaBrec*, 948 F.3d at 841, a prison official's state of mind about the risk of injury to an inmate is “judged subjectively” under the Eighth Amendment. *Sinn v. Lemmon*, 911 F.3d 412, 419 (7th Cir. 2018); accord *LaBrec*, 948 F.3d at 841. “[T]he prison official must have actual, and not merely constructive, knowledge of the risk.” *Sinn*, 911 F.3d at 419 (emphasis added) (quoting *Gevas v. McLaughlin*, 798 F.3d 475, 480 (7th Cir. 2015)). That is, he 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.* (quoting *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 837). An official will only be liable when he or she disregards that risk by failing to take reasonable measures to stop it. *Borello v. Allison*, 446 F.3d 742, 747 (7th Cir. 2006). Under this standard, any claim against Dr. Gaza and Dr. Corvetta regarding the allegations pertaining to Arnold's alleged first attempt to hang himself with bed strings is dismissed. The Complaint alleges here that both doctors responded to the call to address Arnold's first hanging attempt and maintained his suicide watch status at that time. Arnold's contention that they should have done more at that time sounds in medical negligence, not deliberate indifference. This is so for several reasons. First, the doctors actually rendered medical care by maintaining Arnold's suicide watch status; this response did not subject Arnold to a danger of serious injury under the subjective standard. Second, Arnold alleged

that multiple correctional officers failed to report suicide attempts on several occasions, so those prior suicide attempts (not to mention their details) were unknown to the doctors. Thus, Arnold has not alleged the doctors had actual knowledge that Arnold was at risk of serious injury beyond the information of the incident to which they appropriately responded. Finally, Arnold's suicide attempts had been successfully thwarted under suicide watch status, albeit with excessive force. Arnold makes no allegation that the doctors were aware of the excessive force. Additionally, any claim against Dr. Gaza is dismissed because Arnold did not allege that Dr. Gaza was notified of the second hanging attempt or any other suicide attempt before Dr. Corvetta removed suicide watch entirely. The claims that shall proceed are the following: • Eighth Amendment excessive force claims against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy; and • Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference to medical need claims against Sgts. Marts, Fish, and Surguy, and Dr. Corvetta.¹ This summary of claims includes all of the viable claims identified by the Court. All other claims have been dismissed. If the plaintiff believes that additional claims were alleged in the complaint, but not identified by the Court, he shall have through May 28, 2026, in which to file a motion to reconsider the screening order.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SERVICE OF PROCESS

The clerk is directed pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(c)(3) to issue process to defendants in the manner specified by Rule 4(d). Process shall consist of the complaint filed on July 11, 2025, dkt. [1], applicable forms (Notice of Lawsuit and Request for Waiver of Service of Summons and Waiver of Service of Summons), and this Order. The clerk is directed to serve the Indiana Department of Correction and Centurion employees electronically. The clerk is directed to terminate Mr. Lawson and Dr. Gaza as defendants on the docket. Defendant Dr. Corvetta is identified as an employee of Centurion. A copy of this Order and the process documents shall also be served on Centurion electronically. Centurion is ORDERED to provide the full name and last known home address of any defendant who does not waive service if they have such information. This information shall be filed ex parte. ¹ The claim proceeding against Dr. Corvetta is related to the removal of all suicide watch precautions only. Nothing in this Order prohibits the filing of a proper motion pursuant to Rule 12 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. SO ORDERED. Date: 4/29/2026 Ju R. Olson United States District Judge Southern District of Indiana Distribution:

KEANDRE ARNOLD

Psychiatric Unit

PENDLETON - CF

PENDLETON CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Inmate Mail/Parcels 4490 West Reformatory Road

PENDLETON, IN 46064

Electronic Service to IDOC Sgt. Marts Sgt. Fish Sgt. Surguy All at Pendleton Correctional Facility

Electronic Service to Centurion Dr. Corvetta

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