

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Plett v. Tucker

Plett · No. 2:24-cv-2870-DAD-CKD · Decided May 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California grants the plaintiff’s application to proceed in forma pauperis. The court dismisses the prisoner’s complaint for failure to allege sufficient facts supporting an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim based on an alleged denial or delay of medical care, but grants 30 days to amend.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Carolyn K. Delaney
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	May 23, 2025
DOCKET	2:24-cv-2870-DAD-CKD
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A self-represented state prisoner filed a civil-rights complaint and moved to proceed in forma pauperis. The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed it for failure to state a claim, granting leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; the complaint must contain sufficient factual allegations to state a plausible claim for relief under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district-court order

TOPICS

- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- civil rights
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- prisoner civil rights
- constitutional law
- pleading and screening

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a cognizable Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim based on the alleged denial or delay of medical care and medication.
2. Whether the complaint should be dismissed under the prisoner-screening statute for failure to state a claim.
3. Whether plaintiff should be granted leave to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim because its sparse allegations did not establish that Tucker acted with deliberate indifference to plaintiff's health or safety or explain why Tucker was responsible for the alleged deprivations.
2. The complaint was dismissed because it failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.
3. Plaintiff was granted leave to amend the complaint within thirty days.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Mere delay of medical treatment, “without more, is insufficient to state a claim of deliberate medical indifference.”” (at 1)

“Your complaint is being dismissed with leave to amend because you have not alleged sufficient facts to state a claim based on the alleged denial or delay of medical care.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, a state prisoner at CSP-Sacramento, alleged that he has transgender dysphoria and was interviewed regarding hormonal therapy. He alleged that more than six months passed after the interview while defendant Tucker denied him medical treatment and medications. The complaint sought monetary damages but did not allege specific facts showing Tucker's deliberate indifference, responsibility for the alleged deprivations, or harm caused by the delay.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a complaint alleging denial or delay of medical treatment and medication by defendant J. Tucker, a psychologist, and requested monetary damages. The magistrate judge granted in forma pauperis status, screened the complaint, dismissed it with leave to amend, and allowed thirty days to file a first amended complaint.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007)

- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 104-05 (1976)
- Jett v. Penner, 439 F.3d 1091, 1096 (9th Cir. 2006)
- Shapley v. Nevada Board of State Prison Commissioners, 766 F.2d 404, 407 (9th Cir. 1985)
- Hallett v. Morgan, 296 F.3d 732, 745-46 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Noll v. Carlson, 809 F.2d 1446, 1448-49 (9th Cir. 1987)
- George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007)
- Loux v. Rhay, 375 F.2d 55, 57 (9th Cir. 1967)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 MIKEL LEE PLETT 2:24-cv-2870-DAD-CKD P 12 Plaintiff, 13 v. ORDER
14 J. TUCKER, 15 Defendant. 16 17 Plaintiff, a state prisoner, proceeds without counsel and
requests to proceed in forma 18 pauperis. This matter was referred to the undersigned by Local
Rule 302. See 28 U.S.C. § 19 636(b)(1).

Plaintiff's complaint (ECF No. 1) is before the court for screening. The complaint fails 20 to state
a claim and must be dismissed, but plaintiff is granted leave to amend as set forth below. 21 I. In
Forma Pauperis 22 Plaintiff's declaration in support of the motion to proceed in forma pauperis
makes the 23 showing required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a).

The motion is granted. By separate order, plaintiff will 24 be assessed an initial partial filing fee in
accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 25 1915(b)(1). The order will direct the appropriate
agency to collect the initial partial filing fee 26 from plaintiff's trust account and forward it to the
Clerk of the Court. Thereafter, plaintiff will be 27 obligated for monthly payments of twenty
percent of the preceding month's income credited to 28 plaintiff's prison trust account.

These payments will be forwarded by the appropriate agency to 1 the Clerk of the Court each time
the amount in plaintiff's account exceeds \$10.00 until the filing 2 fee is paid in full. 28 U.S.C. §
1915(b)(2). 3 II. Screening Requirement 4 The court is required to screen complaints brought by
prisoners seeking relief against a 5 governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental
entity.

28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The 6 court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has
raised claims that are legally 7 "frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief
may be granted, or that seek 8 monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.
28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1), (2). 9 III. Allegations in the Complaint 10 The events described in the
complaint allegedly occurred at CSP-Sacramento.

(ECF No. 1 11 at 1.) The sole named defendant is J. Tucker, who is alleged to be a psychologist.
(Id. at 2.) 12 Plaintiff has transgender dysphoria and was interviewed on February 5 for the
purpose of getting 13 on hormonal therapy. (Id. at 3.) More than 6 months passed following the

interview during which 14 time defendant was denying plaintiff medical treatment and medications.

(Id.) Plaintiff seeks 15 monetary damages. (Id. at 6.) 16 IV. Discussion 17 The complaint contains insufficient factual allegations to state a claim against defendant 18 Tucker. Rule 8(a)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requires a short and plain statement 19 of the claim that shows the pleader is entitled to relief. *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 20 544, 555 (2007).

In order to state a cognizable claim, a complaint must contain factual allegations 21 sufficient “to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Id.* The facts alleged must ““give 22 the defendant fair notice of what the... claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.”” *Erickson v. 23 Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007) (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555).

24 Plaintiff complains about the alleged denial or delay of medical care, which can violate 25 the Eighth Amendment. See *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 104-05 (1976). A violation occurs 26 when a prison official causes injury as a result of his or her deliberate indifference to a prisoner’s 27 serious medical needs. *Id.* “Deliberate indifference” includes a purposeful act or failure to 28 respond to a prisoner’s pain or possible medical need.

Jett v. Penner, 439 F.3d 1091, 1096 (9th Cir. 2006) citing *Estelle*, 429 U.S. at 104. Mere delay of medical treatment, “without more, is 2 insufficient to state a claim of deliberate medical indifference.” *Shapley v. Nev. Bd. of State 3 Prison Comm’rs*, 766 F.2d 404, 407 (9th Cir. 1985). Where a prisoner alleges that delay of 4 medical treatment evinces deliberate indifference, the prisoner must show the delay caused 5 “significant harm and that defendants should have known this to be the case.” *Hallett v. Morgan*, 6 296 F.3d 732, 745-46 (9th Cir.

2002). 7 Here, plaintiff’s sparse allegations about being denied medical treatment and medication 8 do not survive screening because plaintiff does not allege specific facts that show defendant 9 Tucker acted with deliberate indifference to plaintiff’s health or safety. Plaintiff has not alleged 10 any facts that show why defendant Tucker is responsible for the alleged deprivations.

Merely 11 alleging that defendant Tucker denied plaintiff medical treatment and medications is insufficient 12 to state an Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference claim. 13 V. Leave to Amend 14 Plaintiff is granted leave to amend. See *Noll v. Carlson*, 809 F.2d 1446, 1448-49 (9th Cir. 15 1987). This opportunity to amend is not for the purposes of adding new and unrelated claims.

See 16 *George v. Smith*, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007). Local Rule 220 requires that an amended 17 complaint be complete without reference to any prior pleading. See *Loux v. Rhay*, 375 F.2d 55, 18 57 (9th Cir. 1967). 19 VI. Plain Language Summary for Pro Se Party 20 The following information is meant to explain this order in plain English. This summary 21 is not intended as legal advice.

22 Your complaint is being dismissed with leave to amend because you have not alleged 23
sufficient facts to state a claim based on the alleged denial or delay of medical care. If you choose
24 to file an amended complaint, include more facts about defendant Tucker's purposeful acts or
25 failure to respond to your medical needs. 26 //// 27 //// 28 //// 1 VII.

Conclusion 2 In accordance with the above, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED as follows: 3 1. Plaintiff's
motion to proceed in forma pauperis (ECF No. 2) is GRANTED. 4 2. Plaintiff's complaint is
dismissed with leave to amend. 5 3. Plaintiff is granted thirty days from the date of service of this
order to file an amended 6 complaint that complies with the requirements of the Civil Rights Act,
the Federal 7 Rules of Civil Procedure, and the Local Rules of Practice.

The amended complaint 8 must bear the docket number assigned this case and must be labeled
"First Amended 9 Complaint." Failure to file an amended complaint in accordance with this order
will 10 result in a recommendation that this action be dismissed. 11 | Dated: May 23, 2025 / a ☐☐ /
a Ly a 2 CAROLYN K.DELANEY 13 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 14 15 8,
plet2870.scrn 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28