

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
GEORGIA, MACON DIVISION

John Stephen Ravan v. Sheriff David Davis, et al.

Civil Action No. 5:25-cv-511 (MTT) · No. 5:25-cv-511 (MTT) · Decided December 19, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia grants John Stephen Ravan’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. The court finds that the pro se complaint lacks sufficient factual allegations for a complete frivolity review and orders Ravan to file an amended complaint by January 9, 2026, linking each claim to a named defendant and providing supporting facts.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, Macon Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Marc T. Treadwell
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia, Macon Division
DECIDED	December 19, 2025
DOCKET	5:25-cv-511 (MTT)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff proceeding pro se filed a civil-rights complaint and a motion to proceed in forma pauperis. The district court granted the IFP motion but ordered plaintiff to amend his complaint because the allegations were insufficient to conduct a complete screening review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For IFP eligibility, the court determines whether the affidavit satisfies the poverty requirement by comparing the applicant's assets and liabilities. For frivolity screening and failure to state a claim, the court applies 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) and the Rule 12(b)(6) plausibility standard, while liberally construing a pro se pleading.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; nonprecedential

TOPICS

motion to amend

pleadings

section 1983

prisoners rights

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

civil rights

prisoner civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Ravan established eligibility to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a).
2. Whether the complaint could be subjected to a complete frivolity and failure-to-state-a-claim review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) despite deficiencies in its factual allegations.
3. Whether Ravan should be given an opportunity to amend his pro se complaint and what pleading requirements would govern the amended complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. Ravan's affidavit established that he was unable to pay court fees without undue hardship, so the court granted his motion to proceed in forma pauperis.
2. The court did not dismiss the complaint at the initial screening stage because the deficient allegations might have resulted from the manner in which the pro se claims were pleaded; instead, it required an amended complaint containing sufficient factual and legal allegations for screening.
3. The amended complaint must replace and supersede the original complaint, identify the actions or omissions of each named defendant, link each claim to a defendant, state the timing and resulting injury, and identify the statutory or constitutional basis for each claim; Ravan may not incorporate the original complaint by reference.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Thus, Ravan’s motion to proceed IFP (ECF 2) is GRANTED. But Ravan’s complaint lacks important factual allegations that Ravan may have omitted because of his pro se status. Thus, the Court ORDERS Ravan to amend his complaint by January 9, 2026.”

“The amended complaint will take the place of and supersede Ravan’s original complaint.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Ravan, proceeding without counsel, asserted claims for cruel and unusual punishment, deliberate indifference to serious medical needs, and failure to protect against various jail officials and medical personnel. His complaint contained some factual allegations but did not adequately identify the conduct, timing, injuries, and legal basis associated with each defendant. The court concluded that the deficiencies might result from the manner in which the pro se claims were pleaded and gave him an opportunity to amend.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ravan filed his complaint and IFP motion on November 21, 2025. The court reviewed the IFP affidavit, found that he could not pay filing fees without undue hardship, granted IFP status, and allowed him until January 9,

2026, to file an amended complaint rather than dismissing the action at that stage.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Martinez v. Kristi Kleaners, Inc., 364 F.3d 1305, 1306-08 (11th Cir. 2004)
- Adkins v. E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co., 335 U.S. 331, 339 (1948)
- Thomas v. Chattahoochee Jud. Cir., 574 F. App'x 916, 917 (11th Cir. 2014)
- Phillips v. Mashburn, 746 F.2d 782, 785 (11th Cir. 1984)
- Mack v. Petty, 2014 WL 3845777, at *1 (N.D. Ga. Aug. 4, 2014)
- Carroll v. Gross, 984 F.2d 392, 393 (11th Cir. 1993)
- Thomas v. Harris, 399 F. App'x 508, 509 (11th Cir. 2010)
- Mitchell v. Farcass, 112 F.3d 1483, 1490 (11th Cir. 1997)
- Hughes v. Lott, 350 F.3d 1157, 1160 (11th Cir. 2003)
- Osahar v. U.S. Postal Serv., 297 F. App'x 863, 864 (11th Cir. 2008)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Duff v. Steub, 378 F. App'x 868, 872 (11th Cir. 2010) (per curiam)
- Schreane v. Middlebrooks, 522 F. App'x 845, 847-48 (11th Cir. 2013)
- Hoefling v. City of Miami, 811 F.3d 1271, 1277 (11th Cir. 2016)

OPINION

RAVAN

PER CURIAM.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF GEORGIA

MACON DIVISION

JOHN STEPHEN RAVAN,)

) Plaintiff,)) v.) CIVIL ACTION NO. 5:25-cv-511 (MTT)) Sheriff DAVID DAVIS, et al.,))
Defendants.) _____)

ORDER

On November 21, 2025, Plaintiff John Ravan, proceeding pro se, filed his complaint. ECF 1. That same day, he filed a motion to proceed in forma pauperis (“IFP”). ECF 2. For the following reasons, Ravan’s motion to proceed IFP (ECF 2) is GRANTED. But Ravan’s complaint lacks important factual allegations that Ravan may have omitted because of his pro se status. Thus, the Court ORDERS Ravan to amend his complaint by January 9, 2026.

I. DISCUSSION

A. Motion to Proceed IFP 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) governs motions to proceed IFP. It provides: [A]ny court of the United States may authorize the commencement, prosecution or defense of any suit, action or proceeding, civil or criminal, or appeal therein, without prepayment of fees or security therefor, by a person who submits an affidavit that includes a statement of all assets such prisoner possesses that the person is unable to pay such fees or give security therefor.¹ 1 “Despite the statute’s use of the phrase ‘prisoner possesses,’ the affidavit requirement applies to all persons requesting leave to proceed IFP.” *Martinez v. Kristi Kleaners, Inc.*, 364 F.3d 1305, 1306 n.1 (11th Cir. 2004). When considering a motion to proceed IFP filed under § 1915(a), “the only determination to be made by the court is whether the statements in the affidavit satisfy the requirement of poverty.” *Martinez v. Kristi Kleaners, Inc.*, 364 F.3d 1305, 1307 (11th Cir. 2004) (citation modified). A plaintiff is not required to show he is “absolutely destitute.” *Id.* (quoting *Adkins v. E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co.*, 335 U.S. 331, 339 (1948)). Rather, “an affidavit will be held sufficient if it represents that the litigant, because of his poverty, is unable to pay for the court fees and costs, and to support and provide necessities for himself and his dependents.” *Id.* “A court may not deny an IFP motion without first comparing the applicant’s assets and liabilities in order to determine whether he has satisfied the poverty requirement.” *Thomas v. Chattahoochee Jud. Cir.*, 574 F. App’x 916, 917 (11th Cir. 2014) (citing *Martinez*, 364 F.3d at 1307–08). However, § 1915(a) “should not be a broad highway into the federal courts.” *Phillips v. Mashburn*, 746 F.2d 782, 785 (11th Cir. 1984). Rather, it “conveys only a privilege to proceed without payment to only those litigants unable to pay costs without undue hardship.” *Mack v. Petty*, 2014 WL 3845777, at *1 (N.D. Ga. Aug. 4, 2014) (citations omitted). District courts have “wide discretion” in deciding whether a plaintiff can proceed IFP, and “should grant the privilege sparingly,” especially in civil cases for damages. *Martinez*, 364 F.3d at 1306 (citation omitted). The Court has reviewed Ravan’s IFP affidavit. Ravan’s affidavit establishes that he cannot pay the court fees without undue hardship. ECF 2. Thus, Ravan’s motion to proceed IFP (ECF 2) is GRANTED. B. Frivolity Review Section 1915 does not create an absolute right to proceed IFP in civil actions. “Where the IFP affidavit is sufficient on its face to demonstrate economic eligibility, the court should first docket the case and then proceed to the question of whether the asserted claim is frivolous.” *Martinez*, 364 F.3d at 1307 (citation modified). When allowing a plaintiff to proceed IFP, the Court shall dismiss the case if the Court determines that the complaint (1) “is frivolous or malicious;” (2) “fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted;” or (3) “seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). A claim is frivolous if it “has little or no chance of success,” meaning that it appears “from the face of the complaint that the factual allegations are ‘clearly baseless’ or that the legal theories are ‘indisputably meritless.’” *Carroll v. Gross*, 984 F.2d 392, 393 (11th Cir. 1993). “A dismissal under § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) for failure to state a claim is governed by the same standard as a dismissal pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)

(6).”² *Thomas v. Harris*, 399 F. App’x 508, 509 (11th Cir. 2010) (citing *Mitchell v. Farcass*, 112 F.3d 1483, 1490 (11th Cir. 1997)). However, because Ravan is proceeding pro se, his “pleadings are held to a less stringent standard than pleadings drafted by attorneys and will, therefore, be liberally construed.” *Hughes v. Lott*, 350 F.3d 1157, 1160 (11th Cir. 2003) (citation modified). Even so, “the district court does not 2 To avoid dismissal pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)). On a motion to dismiss, “all well-pleaded facts are accepted as true, and the reasonable inferences therefrom are construed in the light most favorable to the plaintiff.” *In re Galectin Therapeutics, Inc. Sec. Litig.*, 843 F.3d 1257, 1269 n.4 (11th Cir. 2016) (quoting *Garfield v. NDC Health Corp.*, 466 F.3d 1255, 1261 (11th Cir. 2006)). have license to rewrite a deficient pleading.” *Osahar v. U.S. Postal Serv.*, 297 F. App’x 863, 864 (11th Cir. 2008) (citation omitted). Ravan’s complaint has three counts: (1) cruel and unusual punishment against all defendants; (2) deliberate indifference to serious medical needs against “Correct Health, Nurse Vaughn, Nurse Balkom, and Intake Nurse”; (3) failure to protect against “Sherif Davis, Lieutenant, and Correctional Officers.” ECF 1 at 3. While Ravan provides some factual allegations in his complaint, many important allegations are lacking such that the Court is unable to conduct a thorough frivolity review. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b) (stating that a court is required to dismiss a case brought by a pro se plaintiff if it (1) is frivolous, or malicious; (2) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (3) seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief). It is not clear whether this deficiency is because of the manner in which the allegations have been pled, or whether they simply lack substance. However, given Ravan’s pro se status, the Court will afford him an opportunity to amend his complaint to state viable claims. See *Duff v. Steub*, 378 F. App’x 868, 872 (11th Cir. 2010) (per curiam) (“When it appears a pro se plaintiff’s complaint, if more carefully drafted, might state a claim, the district court should give the pro se plaintiff an opportunity to amend his complaint instead of dismissing it.”). For these reasons, Ravan is ORDERED to amend his complaint to include all facts that he wishes to make a part of these proceedings and cite the appropriate statutory or constitutional authority for bringing his claims. Ravan shall have until January 9, 2026, to file his amended complaint. In the “statement of claims” section of his amended complaint, Ravan must link any claims he makes to a named defendant. If Ravan fails to link a named defendant to a claim, the claim will be dismissed; if Ravan makes no allegations in the body of his complaint against a named defendant, that defendant will be removed from the action. Ravan must provide enough facts to plausibly demonstrate that each defendants’ actions or omissions resulted in the violation of his rights under a specific law. It is also recommended that, when drafting his “statement of claims,” Ravan list numbered responses to the following questions (to the extent possible) along with the name of each defendant:

(1) What did each defendant do (or not do) to violate his rights?

(2) When did each action occur?

(3) How was Ravan injured as a result of each defendant's actions?

The amended complaint will take the place of and supersede Ravan's original complaint. Schreane v. Middlebrooks, 522 F. App'x 845, 847-48 (11th Cir. 2013). Ravan may not refer to, or incorporate by reference, his previous complaint. The Court will not look back to the facts alleged in the original complaint once the amended complaint is filed; the Court will only consider the facts in the amended complaint when it conducts the frivolity review required by § 1915(e)(2)(B). Hoefling v. City of Miami, 811 F.3d 1271, 1277 (11th Cir. 2016) (holding that the filing of an amended pleading renders the previous pleading a "legal nullity").

II. CONCLUSION

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915 and for the reasons set forth above, Ravan's motion to proceed IFP (ECF 2) is GRANTED, and Ravan is ORDERED to amend his complaint no later than January 9, 2026. SO ORDERED, this 19th day of December, 2025. S/ Marc T. Treadwell

MARC T. TREADWELL, JUDGE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT