

SUPREME COURT OF IDAHO

State v. Sanchez, 149 Idaho 102

233 P.3d 33 (2009) · No. No. 35547 · Decided April 20, 2009

SUMMARY

The Supreme Court of Idaho reviewed the revocation of Christopher Allen Sanchez's probation after he failed to maintain required contact with his probation officer. The court held that substantial evidence supported the probation-violation finding and that the district court did not abuse its discretion in revoking probation and reinstating the original sentence, including because it sufficiently considered alternatives to imprisonment for a potentially non-willful violation.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Supreme Court of Idaho
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Burdick, Justice; Burdick; J. Jones; W. Jones; Horton; Trout, J. Pro Tem
JURISDICTION	Idaho
DECIDED	April 20, 2009
DOCKET	No. 35547
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The State petitioned for review of the Idaho Court of Appeals' reversal of a district court order revoking Sanchez's probation and reinstating his original sentence.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The Supreme Court directly reviews the lower court's decision on a petition for review, accepting district-court factual findings unless clearly erroneous and freely reviewing the application of constitutional principles. A probation-violation finding is upheld if supported by substantial evidence. The decision whether to revoke probation is reviewed for abuse of discretion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Idaho Supreme Court opinion; precedential
PARTIES	Christopher Allen Sanchez v. State of Idaho

TOPICS

- probation
- criminal procedure
- appellate procedure
- standard of review
- due process

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

probation

appellate procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether substantial evidence supported the finding that Sanchez violated probation by failing to maintain adequate contact with his probation officer.
2. Whether the district court could revoke probation and impose imprisonment for a non-willful or potentially non-willful violation without expressly finding willfulness.
3. Whether the district court abused its discretion by revoking probation after considering alternative methods of addressing the violation.

HOLDINGS

1. Substantial evidence supported the district court's finding that Sanchez violated the reporting condition of his probation by failing to maintain adequate contact with his probation officer.
2. When a probation violation is non-willful or beyond the probationer's control, a court may not revoke probation and order imprisonment without first considering alternative methods of addressing the violation.
3. The district court did not abuse its discretion in revoking Sanchez's probation and reinstating his original sentence.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The determination of whether a probation violation has been established is separate from the decision of what consequence, if any, to impose for that violation.” (149 Idaho at 104)

“If a probationer's violation of a probation condition was not willful, or was beyond the probationer's control, a court may not revoke probation and order imprisonment without first considering alternative methods to address the violation.” (149 Idaho at 105)

“Therefore, we affirm the district court's order revoking probation and reinstating his original sentence.” (149 Idaho at 106)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sanchez pleaded guilty to aggravated battery and received a fifteen-year sentence, with ten years fixed, suspended in favor of probation. His probation required weekly reporting and was specially conditioned on revocation of his California parole and incarceration there. After returning to California, Sanchez lived in a halfway house but stopped maintaining adequate contact with his Idaho probation officer; the district court found that he violated the reporting condition. The court also determined that available alternatives, including the California halfway-house program, were insufficient to protect the public or rehabilitate Sanchez given his history and supervision problems.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sanchez pleaded guilty to aggravated battery and received a suspended sentence and probation. After an evidentiary hearing, the district court found that he violated probation by failing to maintain adequate contact with his probation officer and revoked probation. The Idaho Court of Appeals reversed, concluding that the violation was non-willful and that revocation was an abuse of discretion. The Idaho Supreme Court granted the State's petition for review and affirmed the district court.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Oliver, 144 Idaho 722, 724, 170 P.3d 387, 389 (2007)
- State v. Diaz, 144 Idaho 300, 302, 160 P.3d 739, 741 (2007)
- State v. Knutsen, 138 Idaho 918, 923, 71 P.3d 1065, 1070 (Ct. App. 2003)
- State v. Thompson, 140 Idaho 796, 799, 102 P.3d 1115, 1118 (2004)
- State v. Lafferty, 125 Idaho 378, 381, 383, 870 P.2d 1337, 1340, 1342 (Ct. App. 1994)
- Morrissey v. Brewer, 408 U.S. 471, 479, 92 S. Ct. 2593, 2599, 33 L. Ed. 2d 484, 493 (1972)
- State v. Leach, 135 Idaho 525, 529, 20 P.3d 709, 713 (Ct. App. 2001)