

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
VIRGINIA, ROANOKE DIVISION

Jesse Ryan Stiltner v. Wexford Health Service, et al.

Stiltner · No. 7:25CV00602 · Decided June 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The court dismissed Jesse Ryan Stiltner’s pro se 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim. The court held that the complaint did not allege a policy or custom sufficient to impose liability on Wexford and that HIPAA does not create a private right of action under § 1983; alleged laughter and verbal harassment also did not state a constitutional claim.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Roanoke Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	James P. Jones
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, Roanoke Division
DECIDED	June 12, 2026
DOCKET	7:25CV00602
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A Virginia inmate proceeding pro se filed a civil rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The district court screened the complaint and dismissed it without prejudice for failure to state a claim under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The complaint was reviewed under the failure-to-state-a-claim standard applicable to screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii). The court applied the plausibility standard requiring factual allegations sufficient to state a claim that is plausible on its face.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district court opinion
PARTIES	Jesse Ryan Stiltner v. Wexford Health Service, et al.

TOPICS

- section 1983
- hipaa
- motions to dismiss
- prisoners rights
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner litigation

health law

constitutional law

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a plausible § 1983 claim against Wexford Health Service based on an alleged deprivation of adequate medical care.
2. Whether HIPAA creates a private right of action enforceable through 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
3. Whether an officer's presence during a medical appointment, alleged listening to personal medical information, and laughter or verbal harassment stated a constitutional claim under § 1983.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state a plausible § 1983 claim against Wexford because it alleged no official policy or custom of the corporation that caused a deprivation of federal rights.
2. HIPAA does not create a private right to sue that may be enforced through § 1983; therefore, Stiltner could not state a § 1983 claim based solely on the alleged HIPAA violation.
3. The alleged conduct by Officer Rosa did not state a plausible constitutional claim under § 1983 because laughing or other verbal harassment by prison officials, without more, is constitutionally insufficient.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A complaint must plead facts sufficient to “state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.””

“HIPAA does not create a private right to sue that may be enforced under § 1983.”

“Laughing or other verbal harassment by prison officials, without more, does not state a plausible constitutional claim under § 1983.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Stiltner, a Virginia inmate, alleged that an officer was present during a medical appointment with a mental-health doctor, heard personal medical information, and laughed. He characterized the alleged conduct as a HIPAA violation and named Wexford Health Service as a defendant, but the complaint did not allege any policy or custom attributable to Wexford. The complaint also did not identify conduct by Wexford in its body beyond naming the company in the caption.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Stiltner filed a complaint alleging that Wexford Health Service was liable under § 1983 and that Officer Rosa violated HIPAA and constitutional rights by being present during a mental-health appointment, listening to personal information, and laughing. On screening, the district court concluded that the complaint failed to plead a plausible claim against either defendant and ordered dismissal without prejudice; a separate judgment was to be entered.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Cooper v. Sheehan, 735 F.3d 153, 158 (4th Cir. 2013)
- Rodriguez v. Smithfield Packing Co., 338 F.3d 348, 355 (4th Cir. 2003)
- Carter v. Morris, 164 F.3d 215, 220 (4th Cir. 1999)
- Meeks v. SWVRJ-Haysi Facility, No. 7:25-cv-00226, 2026 WL 482963, at *3 (W.D. Va. Feb. 20, 2026)
- Lewis-Bey v. Wilson, No. 3:17CV763, 2019 WL 4889261, at *3 (E.D. Va. Oct. 3, 2019)
- Payne v. Taslimi, 998 F.3d 648, 660 (4th Cir. 2021)
- Planned Parenthood S. Atl. v. Baker, 942 F.3d 687, 696 (4th Cir. 2019)
- Henslee v. Lewis, 153 F. App'x 178, 180 (4th Cir. 2005) (unpublished)

OPINION

Stiltner

PER CURIAM.

cee RTROANOKE, VA

FILED

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT dune 12, 2026

FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA 77m. □□□□

ROANOKE DIVISION DEPUTY CLERK

JESSE RYAN STILTNER,)

Plaintiff, Case No. 7:25CV00602

OPINION

WEXFORD HEALTH SERVICE, et al., JUDGE JAMES P. JONES

Defendants. Jesse Ryan Stiltner, Pro Se Plaintiff. The plaintiff, a Virginia inmate proceeding pro se, filed this civil rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging that an officer was present in the room during a medical appointment in violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Upon review, I conclude that Stiltner's Complaint must be dismissed for failure to state a claim on which relief may be granted. The court must dismiss a case "at any time" if the court determines that the complaint "'fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted.'" 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)ii). A complaint must plead facts sufficient to "state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). A facially plausible claim includes 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). To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must set forth sufficient factual

allegations against a person for actions taken under color of state law that violated his constitutional rights. *Cooper v. Sheehan*, 735 F.3d 153, 158 (4th Cir. 2013). First, Stiltner names Wexford Health Service as a defendant. Presumably, Stiltner is referring to Wexford Health Sources (Wexford), a private company that provides health care to correctional facilities. When a corporate entity, rather than an individual, is named as a defendant, the entity can be liable only under § 1983 if “an official policy or custom of the corporation causes the alleged deprivation of federal rights.” *Rodriguez v. Smithfield Packing Co.*, 338 F.3d 348, 355 (4th Cir. 2003). Ultimately, the inmate must prove that “an unconstitutional municipal policy” deprived him of adequate medical care. *Carter v. Morris*, 164 F.3d 215, 220 (4th Cir. 1999). Stiltner’s conclusory Complaint makes no such allegations. In fact, nowhere in the body of the Complaint is there any mention of Wexford, let alone its policies. See *Meeks v. SWVRJ-Haysi Facility*, No. 7:25-cv-00226, 2026 WL 482963, at *3 (W.D. Va. Feb. 20, 2026) (“Where a complaint alleges no specific act or conduct on the part of the defendant and the complaint is silent as to the defendant except for his name appearing in the caption, the complaint is properly dismissed, even under the liberal construction to be given pro se complaints.”) (quoting *Lewis- Bey v. Wilson*, No. 3:17CV763, 2019 WL 4889261, at *3 (E.D. Va. Oct. 3, 2019)). Thus, Stiltner has failed to state a plausible claim against Wexford. Second, Stiltner names Officer Rosa as a defendant, and claims that he was present in the room for Stiltner’s appointment with a mental health doctor. Stiltner asserts that Rosa listened to his personal information and laughed, thus violating HIPAA. But “[a] plaintiff seeking a remedy under § 1983 ‘must assert the violation of a federal right, not merely a violation of federal law.’” *Payne v. Taslimi*, 998 F.3d 648, 660 (4th Cir. 2021) (quoting *Planned Parenthood S. Atl. v. Baker*, 942 F.3d 687, 696 (4th Cir. 2019)). HIPAA does not create a private right to sue that may be enforced under § 1983. *Id.* Therefore, because Stiltner cannot state a § 1983 claim based on Rosa’s alleged HIPAA violation, this claim must be dismissed. To the extent that Stiltner alleges that Rosa violated his constitutional rights by laughing at his personal medical information, such claim must likewise fail. Laughing or other verbal harassment by prison officials, without more, does not state a plausible constitutional claim under § 1983. See *Henslee v. Lewis*, 153 F. App’x 178, 180 (4th Cir. 2005) (unpublished). Accordingly, Stiltner’s Complaint will be dismissed without prejudice for failure to state a claim on which relief may be granted under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii). A separate Judgment will be entered. ENTER: June 12, 2026

/s/ JAMES P. JONES

Senior United States District Judge