

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Michael Cox v. Bernadette Mason, et al.

Cox · No. 4:22-cv-01824 · Decided December 22, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania considered defendant Jenna Williams’s unopposed motion for summary judgment in Michael Cox’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action alleging deliberate indifference to serious medical needs. The court reviewed Cox’s medical records concerning worsening back and neurological symptoms, his February 2021 emergency hospitalization and cervical surgery, and subsequent treatment. The court granted the motion for summary judgment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Judge Julia K. Munley
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	December 22, 2025
DOCKET	4:22-cv-01824
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant Jenna Williams moved for summary judgment under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56 on Cox's amended complaint alleging deliberate indifference to a serious medical need under the Eighth Amendment and 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Cox did not respond, and the court deemed the motion unopposed but independently evaluated whether summary judgment was appropriate.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Even when a motion is uncontested, the court must determine independently whether the record entitles the movant to judgment as a matter of law, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Michael Cox v. Jenna Williams

TOPICS

prisoners rights

cruel and unusual punishment

section 1983

summary judgment

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner medical care

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court could grant summary judgment despite Cox's failure to respond to the motion and statement of material facts.
2. Whether the undisputed record established that PA Williams was deliberately indifferent to Cox's serious medical needs in violation of the Eighth Amendment and 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
3. Whether Cox's disagreement with the course of medical treatment or Williams's alleged statement that he was faking symptoms established a constitutional violation.

HOLDINGS

1. A nonmoving party does not lose a summary-judgment motion by default merely by failing to respond; the court must still determine whether the undisputed record establishes that the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.
2. Williams was entitled to summary judgment because the undisputed record did not permit a reasonable factfinder to conclude that she acted with deliberate indifference to Cox's serious medical needs.
3. A prisoner's disagreement with the course or adequacy of medical treatment, without more, does not establish deliberate indifference under the Eighth Amendment.
4. Williams's alleged statement that Cox was faking or lying about his symptoms, viewed in the light most favorable to Cox, did not itself constitute an Eighth Amendment violation.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“When a summary judgment motion is uncontested, the non-responding party does not lose the summary judgment motion by default.” (at 32)

“An inmate’s claims against members of a prison medical department are not viable under Section 1983 when the inmate receives continuing care, but believes that more should be done and maintains that options available to medical personnel were not pursued on the inmate’s behalf.” (at 34)

“In sum, the uncontroverted record shows that Cox received continuous and responsive medical treatment throughout his incarceration.” (at 37)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Cox, formerly incarcerated at SCI-Mahanoy, experienced worsening back pain, numbness, weakness, and difficulty walking beginning in January 2021. PA Jenna Williams saw him multiple times, discussed medications and treatment options, arranged diagnostic imaging and consultations, provided or continued assistive devices

and medication, and on February 18, 2021 helped arrange his transfer to an emergency department when his symptoms worsened. Cox underwent cervical decompression and fusion surgery and received extensive follow-up care. He alleged that Williams delayed treatment, accused him of faking symptoms, and was deliberately indifferent to his serious medical needs.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Cox filed the civil-rights action in the Berks County Court of Common Pleas on August 24, 2022. Defendants removed it to the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, which transferred venue to the Middle District of Pennsylvania because the relevant events occurred at SCI-Mahanoy. After amendment of the complaint, Williams was the sole remaining defendant. The court granted Williams's unopposed motion for summary judgment and directed that judgment be entered in her favor.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322-23 (1986)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 257 (1986)
- Hugh v. Butler County Family YMCA, 418 F.3d 265, 267 (3d Cir. 2005)
- Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. v. Zenith Radio Corp., 475 U.S. 574, 587 (1986)
- First National Bank of Arizona v. Cities Service Co., 391 U.S. 253, 289 (1968)
- Hitchens v. County of Montgomery, 98 F. App'x 106, 110 (3d Cir. 2004)
- Anchorage Associates v. V.I. Board of Tax Review, 922 F.2d 168, 175 (3d Cir. 1990)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 103-05 (1976)
- Rouse v. Plantier, 182 F.3d 192, 197 (3d Cir. 1999)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 837 (1994)
- Harrison v. Barkley, 219 F.3d 132, 138-40 (2d Cir. 2000)
- Spruill v. Gillis, 372 F.3d 218, 235 (3d Cir. 2004)
- Monmouth County Correctional Institutional Inmates v. Lanzaro, 834 F.2d 326, 346 (3d Cir. 1987)
- James v. Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 230 F. App'x 195, 197 (3d Cir. 2007)
- Parham v. Johnson, 126 F.3d 454, 458 n.7 (3d Cir. 1997)
- Inmates of Allegheny County Jail v. Pierce, 612 F.2d 754, 762 (3d Cir. 1979)
- White v. Napoleon, 897 F.2d 103, 110 (3d Cir. 1990)
- Williams v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 146 F. App'x 554, 557-58 (3d Cir. 2005)
- Williams v. Borough of West Chester, Pennsylvania, 891 F.2d 458, 460 (3d Cir. 1989)