

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Dawn Poole, et al. v. HealthRIGHT 360, et al.

Poole · No. 25-cv-03173-JCS · Decided January 2, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California granted Defendants’ motion for judgment on the pleadings as to Plaintiff’s renewed survivor claim arising from the death of Justin Cartright at a sober living facility. The court held that the amended allegations were identical to those previously found insufficient because they asserted negligence causing the decedent’s death, and dismissed Claim Four with prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Joseph C. Spero
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	January 2, 2026
DOCKET	25-cv-03173-JCS
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(c) for judgment on the pleadings directed to the plaintiff's renewed survivor claim. The court granted the motion and dismissed Claim Four with prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Rule 12(c), the court applies substantially the same analysis as under Rule 12(b)(6), taking the alleged facts as true and determining whether they entitle the plaintiff to a legal remedy.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Dawn Poole, et al. v. HealthRIGHT 360, et al.

TOPICS

- motion for judgment on the pleadings
- pleadings
- civil procedure
- negligence
- damages

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether judgment on the pleadings was proper under Rule 12(c) where the amended complaint's survivor-claim allegations were identical to those previously found legally insufficient.
2. Whether a California survivor claim may be based on negligence causing the decedent's death rather than on a cause of action belonging to the decedent before death.
3. Whether plaintiff should receive further leave to amend after failing to cure the defect following a prior opportunity to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. Judgment on the pleadings is analyzed substantially like a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, and the court may determine whether the facts alleged, taken as true, entitle the plaintiff to a legal remedy.
2. A California survivor claim cannot be based on the decedent's own death when the allegations assert that defendants' negligence caused the death; such a claim fails as a matter of law because wrongful-death rights vest in the decedent's heirs.
3. No further leave to amend was warranted because plaintiff had already been given an opportunity to amend and repeated the same defective survivor-claim allegations.
4. Even if the survivor claim were construed as seeking damages for predeath pain and suffering caused by elder abuse, it would be duplicative of the separate Elder Abuse Act claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Analysis under Rule 12(c) is substantially identical to analysis under Rule 12(b)(6) because, under both rules, a court must determine whether the facts alleged in the complaint, taken as true, entitle the plaintiff to a legal remedy.” (at 1)

“In contrast, a survivor claim is “a separate and distinct cause of action which belonged to the decedent before death but, by statute, survives that event.”” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Justin Cartright, who had substance abuse and other comorbid conditions, entered HealthRIGHT 360's residential treatment program on December 28, 2023, after being released from jail. The amended complaint alleged that he relapsed on unspecified drugs and died at a HealthRIGHT 360 facility on January 14, 2024. His daughter asserted a survivor claim alleging that defendants' negligence caused his death, along with claims including elder abuse and wrongful death.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The court previously dismissed the original survivor claim with leave to amend, finding that the allegations characterized negligence as causing the decedent's death. Plaintiff then filed a First Amended Complaint, but the allegations supporting the survivor claim were identical to those in the original complaint. Defendants answered

the amended complaint and moved for judgment on the pleadings. The court granted the motion without further leave to amend.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Chavez v. United States, 683 F.3d 1102, 1108
- N. Star Int'l v. Ariz. Corp. Comm'n, 720 F.2d 578, 581
- Est. of Swindell v. Cnty. of Sonoma, No. 15-CV-897-SC, 2015 WL 6177743, at *6 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 21, 2015)
- Rich v. Taser Int'l, Inc., No. 09-cv-02450-ECR-RJJ, 2012 WL 4490845, at *4 (D. Nev. Sept. 26, 2012)
- Quiroz v. Seventh Ave. Ctr., 140 Cal. App. 4th 1256, 1264
- Est. of Serna

OPINION

1 2 3 4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 6
DAWN POOLE, et al., 7 Case No. 25-cv-03173-JCS Plaintiffs, 8 v. ORDER GRANTING
DEFENDANTS' 9 MOTION FOR JUDGMENT ON THE HEALTHRIGHT 360, et al.,
PLEADINGS 10 Defendants. Re: Dkt. No. 43 11 12 13 I. INTRODUCTION 14 This case
involves the tragic death of Justin Cartright (“Decedent”), apparently due to a 15 drug overdose,
while he was a resident of Defendants’ sober living facility.

In the Court’s July 7, 16 2025 Order, the Court granted in part and denied in part Defendants’
motion to dismiss, finding, 17 inter alia, that 1) insufficient facts were alleged to establish standing
on the part of the Decedent’s 18 parents to assert a wrongful death claim (Claim One); and 2) the
survivor claim (Claim Four) 19 failed because it was based on negligence resulting in the
Decedent’s death.

Dkt. no. 29 (“July 7 20 Order”) at 9-10, 20-21. The Court dismissed both claims with leave to
amend. Id. at 23. 21 On July 29, 2025, a motion to intervene was filed seeking to name Decedent’s
daughter as 22 plaintiff instead of his parents, dkt. no. 34, along with a proposed First Amended
Complaint 23 (“FAC”). Pursuant to the stipulation of the parties, the Court dismissed Decedents’
parents and 24 ordered the FAC filed, subject to any defenses Defendants wished to assert to the
claims asserted 25 therein.

Dkt. no. 38. The Court set a response deadline of August 27, 2025. Id. Defendants filed 26 an
answer to the FAC on that date. 27 On October 15, 2025, Defendants filed a Motion for Judgment
on the Pleadings 1 of Civil Procedure as to Plaintiff’s renewed survivor claim (Claim Four).

The Court finds that the 2 Motion is suitable for determination without oral argument and therefore vacates the motion 3 hearing set for January 14, 2026 pursuant to Civil Local Rule 7-1(b). The Case Management 4 Conference set for that will be conducted at 2:00 p.m. instead of 9:30 a.m.

For the reasons 5 stated below, the Motion is GRANTED. 6 II. BACKGROUND 7 In the FAC, Plaintiff alleges that Defendant HealthRIGHT 360 is a non-profit provider of 8 residential treatment and sober living programs, including San Francisco-based Walden House. 9 FAC ¶¶ 3-4. According to the FAC, HealthRIGHT 360 is “the predominant substance use 10 residential treatment and rehab programs in San Francisco.” Id. ¶ 20.

Defendant Vitka Eisen is the 11 CEO of HealthRIGHT 360 and the FAC alleges that she was “responsible for HR360’s various 12 residential treatment and sober living programs.” Id. ¶ 4. 13 The FAC alleges that Plaintiff G.P. “is the daughter of Decedent... and is his sole heir 14 under the law of intestacy and his successor in interest.” Id. ¶ 1.

The FAC alleges that Decedent 15 was homeless and “suffering from co-morbid conditions including substance abuse disorder.” Id. ¶ 16 19. According to the FAC, Decedent was incarcerated at the Madera County Jail in September 17 2023, and was released in December 2023.” Id. Upon Decedent’s release from custody, the FAC 18 alleges, Decedent’s mother offered to help Decedent relocate to Dublin, Ireland, on the condition 19 that Decedent first attended “a drug residential treatment and rehab.” Id. ¶ 20.

Decedent agreed 20 and was admitted to HealthRIGHT 360’s residential treatment program on December 28, 2023, 21 the FAC alleges. Id. ¶¶ 20–21. The FAC alleges that on January 14, 2024, Decedent relapsed on 22 unspecified drugs and died while in a HealthRIGHT 360 facility. Id. ¶ 29. 23 Like the original complaint, the FAC asserts four claims under California law against 24 Defendants in connection with Decedent’s death: 1) wrongful death (Claim One); 2) neglect of a 25 dependent adult under Cal. Welf. & Inst.

Code § 15610.57 and § 15657 (“the Elder Abuse Act”) 26 (Claim Two); 3) negligent training, supervision and retention (Claim Three); and 4) survival under 27 Cal. Code Civ. Proc. § 377.30 et seq. (Claim Four) (“the Survivor Claim”). Id. ¶¶ 43–76. 1 Court found in the July 7 Order that the claim fell short in the original complaint, pointing out that 2 the allegations setting forth the Survivor Claim in the FAC (FAC ¶¶ 72-76) are identical to the 3 allegations in the original Complaint (Compl. ¶¶ 76-80).

4 III. ANALYSIS 5 A. Legal Standards Under Rule 12(c) 6 Rule 12(c) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure permits a party to move for judgment 7 on the pleadings “[a]fter the pleadings are closed—but early enough not to delay trial.” Fed. R. 8 Civ. P. 12(c). “Analysis under Rule 12(c) is substantially identical to analysis under Rule 12(b)(6) 9 because, under both rules, a court must

determine whether the facts alleged in the complaint, taken as true, entitle the plaintiff to a legal remedy.” *Chavez v. United States*, 683 F.3d 1102, 1108 (9th Cir. 2012).

(citation and internal quotation marks omitted). 12 A complaint may be dismissed under Rule 12(b)(6) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 13 for failure to state a claim on which relief can be granted. “The purpose of a motion to dismiss 14 under Rule 12(b)(6) is to test the legal sufficiency of the complaint.” *N. Star Int’l v. Ariz. Corp.* 15 Comm’n, 720 F.2d 578, 581 (9th Cir. 1983).

Generally, a plaintiff’s burden at the pleading stage is 16 relatively light. Rule 8(a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure states that a “pleading which sets 17 forth a claim for relief... shall contain... a short and plain statement of the claim showing that 18 the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a). 19 B. Discussion 20 As discussed in the Court’s July 7 Order, a wrongful death cause of action is a statutory 21 claim that arises at the time of a decedent’s death.

July 7 Order at 8-9 (citing *Est. of Swindell v. Cnty. of Sonoma*, No. 15-CV-897-SC, 2015 WL 6177743, at *6 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 21, 2015); *Rich v. Taser Int’s, Inc.*, No. 09-cv-02450-ECR-RJJ, 2012 WL 4490845, at *4 (D. Nev. Sept. 26, 2012)). 24 In contrast, a survivor claim is “a separate and distinct cause of action which belonged to the 25 decedent before death but, by statute, survives that event.” *Id.* at 21 (citing *Quiroz v. Seventh Ave. Ctr.*, 140 Cal. App. 4th 1256, 1264 (2006)).

A survivor claim cannot be based on the decedent’s 27 own death as a wrongful death claim vests in the decedent’s heirs. *Id.* at 22 (citing *Est. of Serna v. 1 2021*)). Furthermore, predeath pain and suffering damages generally are not available on a 2 survivor claim, but there is an exception to this rule where a plaintiff establishes neglect under the 3 Elder Abuse Act.

Id. 4 In the July 7 Order, the Court found that the allegations in the original complaint in support 5 of the survivor claim amounted to a claim that Defendants’ negligence caused Decedent’s death 6 and therefore, that the claim failed under the rule set forth in the *Estate of Serna* case. *Id.* 7 Because the allegations in the FAC in support of the Survivor Claim are identical to the 8 allegations in the original complaint, the Court reaches the same conclusion as to that claim, which 9 fails as a matter of law for the reasons set forth in the July 7 Order.'

Because Plaintiff has been 10 || given an opportunity to amend and has failed to cure this defect, no further leave to amend this 11 claim will be afforded Plaintiff. 12 || Iv. CONCLUSION 13 For the reasons stated above, the Court GRANTS the Motion and dismisses Plaintiffs 14 || Survivor Claim (Claim Four) with prejudice. IT IS SO ORDERED. 16 17 || Dated: January 2, 2026 Z 18 19 € J PH C. SPERO 20 nited States Magistrate Judge 21 22 23 24 25 26 07 ' Even assuming that the Court were to construe the allegations in the FAC broadly to find that the Survivor Claim is based not on Decedent’s death but instead, on pain and suffering experienced 2g || before Decedent’s

death as a result of Defendants' alleged neglect, in violation of the Elder Abuse Act, that claim would be duplicative of Claim Two, for violation of the Elder Abuse Act.

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