

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS, URBANA DIVISION

Sandra Lopez v. George Duncan et al.

Lopez · No. 2:26-cv-02143 · Decided June 23, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois screened Sandra Lopez’s prisoner complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court allowed an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim to proceed against Dr. George Duncan in his individual capacity, dismissed the claims against the other defendants, denied Lopez’s motion for appointed counsel, and directed service of the complaint.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Urbana Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Colleen R. Lawless
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Urbana Division
DECIDED	June 23, 2026
DOCKET	2:26-cv-02143
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Prisoner civil-rights complaint screened under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, with a pending motion for appointment of counsel.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	At § 1915A screening, the court accepts factual allegations as true and construes them liberally in the plaintiff's favor, but conclusory statements and labels are insufficient; the complaint must state a plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court screening order with no reported citation.
PARTIES	Sandra Lopez v. George Duncan, Illinois Department of Corrections, Centurian Correctional Healthcare, Wexford Health Sources, Incorporated

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

cruel and unusual punishment

civil procedure

health law

PRACTICE AREAS

Prisoner civil rights

Constitutional law

Civil procedure

Correctional healthcare

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Lopez's allegations stated an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim against Dr. Duncan.
2. Whether Lopez stated a viable § 1983 policy-or-custom claim against Centurian Correctional Healthcare and Wexford Health Sources, Incorporated.
3. Whether the Illinois Department of Corrections was a suable person under § 1983.
4. Whether Lopez was entitled to appointed counsel at the screening stage.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint plausibly stated an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim against Dr. Duncan, and the claim proceeds against him in his individual capacity.
2. The complaint failed to state plausible § 1983 claims against Centurian and Wexford because it did not allege an unconstitutional policy, widespread custom, or action by a final policymaker.
3. The complaint failed to state a plausible claim against the Illinois Department of Corrections because the entity named was not a suable person under § 1983.
4. The motion for counsel was denied because Lopez did not meet the threshold requirement of showing a reasonable attempt to obtain counsel or that she was effectively precluded from doing so.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Plaintiff’s account is sufficient to state an Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference claim against Defendant Duncan.”

“Plaintiff’s Motion for Counsel (Doc. 5) is denied because she has not satisfied her threshold burden of demonstrating that she attempted to hire counsel, which typically requires writing to several lawyers and attaching the responses received.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sandra Lopez, an inmate at Decatur Correctional Center, alleged that Dr. George Duncan treated her hand pain beginning in January 2024 as arthritis and repeatedly issued activity-restriction orders in January, May, and July 2024. After filing grievances, Lopez was referred to a specialist in July 2025; imaging showed deterioration of two cervical spinal disks and nerve compression, and she underwent surgery in February 2026. She claimed that earlier proper medical care might have prevented the damage from becoming as severe.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a § 1983 complaint alleging constitutionally inadequate medical care for persistent hand pain and later-discovered spinal deterioration. The court conducted merit review under § 1915A, allowed an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim to proceed against Dr. Duncan in his individual capacity, excluded claims against the other defendants, denied the motion for counsel, and ordered service and further case-management procedures.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Turley v. Rednour, 729 F.3d 645, 649 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Alexander v. United States, 721 F.3d 418, 422 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Gutierrez v. Peters, 111 F.3d 1364, 1369 (7th Cir. 1997)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 104 (1976)
- Vance v. Peters, 97 F.3d 987, 991 (7th Cir. 1996)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 834, 837 (1994)
- Greeno v. Daley, 414 F.3d 645, 653 (7th Cir. 2005)
- Collignon v. Milwaukee County, 163 F.3d 982, 989 (7th Cir. 1998)
- Sain v. Wood, 512 F.3d 886, 894-95 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Thomas v. Cook County Sheriff's Department, 604 F.3d 293, 303 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Woodward v. Correctional Medical Services of Illinois, Inc., 368 F.3d 917, 927-28 (7th Cir. 2004)
- Monell v. New York City Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658 (1978)
- Pembaur v. City of Cincinnati, 475 U.S. 469, 479 (1986)
- Smith v. Knox County Jail, 666 F.3d 1037, 1040 (7th Cir. 2012)
- White v. Knight, 710 F. App'x 260, 262 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Jackson v. County of McLean, 953 F.2d 1070, 1071 (7th Cir. 1992)
- Pruitt v. Mote, 503 F.3d 647, 654 (7th Cir. 2007)