

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
ARKANSAS, EL DORADO DIVISION

Alvin Wesley King v. Sheriff Tommy Sturgeon, Ashley County,
Arkansas; and Jail Administrator Johnny Guy, Ashley County
Detention Center

Civil No. 1:25-CV-01036-MEF (W.D. Ark. Jan. 26, 2026) · No. Civil No. 1:25-CV-01036-MEF · Decided
January 26, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas grants defendants’ motion for summary judgment in Alvin Wesley King’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action concerning conditions of confinement at the Ashley County Detention Center. The court holds that King failed to exhaust available administrative remedies under the Prison Litigation Reform Act before filing suit and rejects his arguments that the grievance process was unavailable or futile. The case is dismissed without prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas, El Dorado Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Mark E. Ford
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Arkansas, El Dorado Division
DECIDED	January 26, 2026
DOCKET	Civil No. 1:25-CV-01036-MEF
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved for summary judgment on the ground that Plaintiff failed to exhaust administrative remedies under the Prison Litigation Reform Act before filing his § 1983 action.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is appropriate when the movant shows that no genuine dispute of material fact exists and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court views the evidence and reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the nonmoving party, and the nonmoving party must identify specific facts creating a genuine issue for trial.

TOPICS

prisoners rights

summary judgment

section 1983

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

civil procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff exhausted available administrative remedies before filing his § 1983 conditions-of-confinement action as required by 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a).
2. Whether the Ashley County Detention Center grievance procedure was unavailable to Plaintiff so as to excuse nonexhaustion.
3. Whether Defendants were entitled to summary judgment on the exhaustion issue.

HOLDINGS

1. A prisoner must exhaust available administrative remedies before initiating a federal action concerning prison conditions; exhaustion completed after filing does not satisfy § 1997e(a), and dismissal is mandatory when exhaustion was incomplete at filing.
2. Plaintiff did not properly exhaust the detention center's grievance procedure because the only pre-suit grievance concerned delayed mail rather than the conditions-of-confinement claims, and the other grievances were either unrelated or filed after suit commenced.
3. The Ashley County Detention Center grievance procedure was available to Plaintiff, and none of his asserted reasons for failing to use it excused nonexhaustion.
4. Defendants were entitled to summary judgment because the undisputed record established that Plaintiff failed to exhaust available administrative remedies before filing suit.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“the degree of specificity required in a prison grievance ‘will vary from system to system and claim to claim, but it is the prison’s requirements, and not that PLRA, that define the boundaries of proper exhaustion.’” (at 7)

“An inmate must exhaust available remedies, but need not exhaust unavailable ones.” (at 10)

“the Defendants’ Motion for Summary Judgment for Failure to Exhaust Administrative Remedies (ECF No. 22) is GRANTED and this case is DISMISSED WITHOUT PREJUDICE.” (at 13)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff was detained at the Ashley County Detention Center from December 18, 2024, until he filed suit on April 28, 2025, alleging numerous unsanitary and inadequate conditions of confinement. Before filing suit, he

submitted one grievance concerning delayed legal mail, not the conditions challenged in the complaint. Other grievances identified by Plaintiff were submitted after suit was filed and concerned cell-door access or access to a notary rather than the pleaded confinement conditions.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a pro se, in forma pauperis § 1983 action alleging unconstitutional conditions of confinement at the Ashley County Detention Center. Following preservice review, some conditions-of-confinement claims proceeded against Sheriff Tommy Sturgeon and Jail Administrator Johnny Guy, while other claims were dismissed without prejudice. After Defendants answered, they moved for summary judgment for failure to exhaust administrative remedies. The court granted the motion and dismissed the action without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Ward v. Olson, 939 F. Supp. 2d 956, 961 (D. Minn. 2013)
- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248, 252, 255 (1986)
- Jackson v. United Parcel Serv., Inc., 643 F.3d 1081, 1085 (8th Cir. 2011)
- Forrest v. Kraft Foods, Inc., 285 F.3d 688, 691 (8th Cir. 2002)
- Booth v. Churner, 532 U.S. 731, 733 (2001)
- Chelette v. Harris, 229 F.3d 684, 687 (8th Cir. 2000)
- Abdul-Muhammad v. Kempker, 486 F.3d 444, 446 (8th Cir. 2007)
- Jones v. Bock, 549 U.S. 199, 218 (2007)
- Washington v. Uner, 273 F. App'x 575, 577 (8th Cir. 2008)
- Woodford v. Ngo, 548 U.S. 81, 91-92 (2006)
- Johnson v. Jones, 340 F.3d 624, 627 (8th Cir. 2003)
- Crossley v. Georgia-Pacific Corp., 355 F.3d 1112, 1114 (8th Cir. 2004)
- Jaurequi v. Carter Manufacturing Co., 173 F.3d 1076, 1085 (8th Cir. 1999)
- Smith v. Andrews, 75 F.4th 805, 808-09 (8th Cir. 2023)
- Ross v. Blake, 578 U.S. 632, 643-44 (2016)
- Jihad v. Fabian, 680 F. Supp. 2d 1021, 1040 (D. Minn. 2010)
- Ace Property & Casualty Insurance Co. v. Federal Crop Insurance Corp., 440 F.3d 992, 1000 (8th Cir. 2006)