

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Daniel Wayne Roland v. Wayne County Prison, et al.

Daniel Wayne Roland v. Wayne County Prison, et al. · No. 4:25-CV-01307 · Decided February 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania partially dismisses Daniel Wayne Roland’s amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii). The court dismisses claims against Wayne County Correctional Facility, Acting Sergeant Jaycox, and Correctional Officer Carney, while allowing Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claims to proceed against Warden Williams, Deputy Warden Masco, and Lieutenant Soccodoto.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Matthew W. Brann
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	February 24, 2026
DOCKET	4:25-CV-01307
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. After the court dismissed the initial complaint for failure to state a claim and granted limited leave to amend, plaintiff filed an amended complaint. The court screened the amended complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and dismissed certain claims and defendants while allowing other claims to proceed.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Rule 12(b)(6) plausibility standard to screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii). It accepted well-pleaded factual allegations as true, drew reasonable inferences in plaintiff's favor, disregarded legal conclusions, and considered whether the allegations plausibly established entitlement to relief. Because plaintiff proceeded pro se, the pleading was liberally construed.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unknown

PARTIES

Daniel Wayne Roland v. Wayne County Prison, Randal Williams, John Masco, Paul Soccodoto, Scott Jaycox, Walker Carney

TOPICS

section 1983 prisoners rights cruel and unusual punishment motions to dismiss civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights prisoner litigation constitutional law federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Wayne County Correctional Facility is a person subject to liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. Whether Roland plausibly pleaded an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim against Warden Williams, Deputy Warden Masco, and Lieutenant Soccodoto.
3. Whether Roland plausibly pleaded an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim against Acting Sergeant Jaycox and Correctional Officer Carney.
4. Whether further leave to amend should be granted after the deficiencies in the initial complaint and amended complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. A county prison is not a person subject to suit under Section 1983, and Roland did not allege an unconstitutional policy or custom that could support municipal liability. The claim against Wayne County Correctional Facility was dismissed.
2. Roland plausibly stated Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claims against Warden Williams, Deputy Warden Masco, and Lieutenant Soccodoto because he alleged a substantial risk of serious harm, their actual awareness of that risk through repeated warnings, and their failure to take action before the assault.
3. Roland failed to plausibly plead deliberate indifference by Officer Carney or Acting Sergeant Jaycox. The allegations against Carney amounted at most to negligence, and the allegation against Jaycox did not establish knowledge of the danger and impermissibly relied on respondeat superior liability.
4. Further leave to amend was denied because Roland had already been given an opportunity to amend and had failed to cure the pleading deficiencies; additional amendment would be futile.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Being violently assaulted in prison is simply not part of the penalty that criminal offenders pay for their offenses against society.” (at 6)

“In deciding a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss, courts should not inquire “whether a plaintiff will ultimately prevail but whether the claimant is entitled to offer evidence to support the claims.”” (at 4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Roland alleged that on March 1, 2024, inmate Michael Casabianca attacked him at Wayne County Correctional Facility, causing serious injuries to his jaw and teeth. Roland alleged that he and other prisoners had repeatedly warned Warden Williams, Deputy Warden Masco, and Lieutenant Soccodoto about Casabianca's known mental-health and behavioral problems, but the officials took no action. Roland also alleged that Officer Carney left him in a day room contrary to prison security policy and that Acting Sergeant Jaycox failed to ensure compliance with security protocols.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Roland filed the initial complaint in July 2025 while incarcerated and proceeded in forma pauperis. The court screened the initial pleading under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915A(a) and 1915(e), dismissed all claims for failure to state a claim, and granted limited leave to amend. Roland timely filed an amended complaint asserting an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim. The court dismissed the claims against Wayne County Correctional Facility, Acting Sergeant Jaycox, and Correctional Officer Carney, but allowed the claims against Warden Williams, Deputy Warden Masco, and Lieutenant Soccodoto to proceed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Gonzaga Univ. v. Doe*, 536 U.S. 273 (2002)
- *Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 109-10 & n.11, 114 (3d Cir. 2002)
- *Allah v. Seiverling*, 229 F.3d 220, 223 (3d Cir. 2000)
- *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974)
- *Nami v. Fauver*, 82 F.3d 63, 66 (3d Cir. 1996)
- *Phillips v. County of Allegheny*, 515 F.3d 224, 229 (3d Cir. 2008)
- *Mayer v. Belichick*, 605 F.3d 223, 230 (3d Cir. 2010)
- *Pension Benefit Guar. Corp. v. White Consol. Indus.*, 998 F.2d 1192, 1196 (3d Cir. 1993)
- *Connelly v. Lane Const. Corp.*, 809 F.3d 780, 787 (3d Cir. 2016)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 675, 679, 681 (2009)
- *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- *Rehberg v. Paulk*, 566 U.S. 356, 361 (2012)
- *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 417 (1976)
- *Will v. Mich. Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 64-65, 71 (1989)
- *Fischer v. Cahill*, 474 F.2d 991, 992 (3d Cir. 1973)
- *Slagle v. County of Clarion*, 435 F.3d 262, 264 n.3 (3d Cir. 2006)
- *Stankowski v. Farley*, 487 F. Supp. 2d 543, 554 (M.D. Pa. 2007)
- *Foye v. Wexford Health Sources Inc.*, 675 F. App'x 210, 215 (3d Cir. 2017)

- Natale v. Camden Cnty. Corr. Facility, 318 F.3d 575, 583-84 (3d Cir. 2003)
- Bistrrian v. Levi, 696 F.3d 352, 366-67 (3d Cir. 2012)
- Mack v. Yost, 968 F.3d 311 (3d Cir. 2020)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 833-34, 842 (1994)
- Beers-Capitol v. Whetzel, 256 F.3d 120, 125 (3d Cir. 2001)
- Dooley v. Wetzel, 957 F.3d 366, 374 (3d Cir. 2020)
- Foman v. Davis, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962)
- Jones v. Unknown D.O.C. Bus Driver & Transp. Crew, 944 F.3d 478, 483 (3d Cir. 2019)

OPINION

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA DANIEL WAYNE ROLAND, No. 4:25-CV-01307 Plaintiff, (Chief Judge Brann) v. WAYNE COUNTY PRISON, et al., Defendants. MEMORANDUM OPINION FEBRUARY 24, 2026 Plaintiff Daniel Wayne Roland filed the instant pro se civil rights lawsuit under Section 1983,¹ claiming that officials at Wayne County Correctional Facility violated his constitutional rights.

After dismissal of his initial complaint, Roland filed an amended pleading. For the following reasons, the Court will dismiss in part Roland’s amended complaint. I. BACKGROUND Roland lodged his initial complaint in July 2025 while incarcerated at SCI Phoenix, eventually paying the initial partial filing fee approximately one month ¹ 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Section 1983 creates a private cause of action to redress constitutional wrongs committed by state officials.

The statute is not a source of substantive rights; it serves as a mechanism for vindicating rights otherwise protected by federal law. See Gonzaga Univ. later.² It appears that Roland is no longer incarcerated and currently resides in Lemoyne, Pennsylvania.³ Roland initially alleged Section 1983 claims sounding in Fourteenth Amendment procedural due process, Eighth Amendment conditions of confinement, and Eighth Amendment failure to protect.⁴ He named the following eight defendants: Wayne County Prison, Wayne County Prison Board, Warden Williams, Deputy Warden John Masco, Lieutenant Paul Soccodoto, Sergeant Huffman, Acting Sergeant Jaycox, and Correctional Officer Carney.⁵ The Court screened the complaint as required under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a).⁶ All claims were dismissed for failure to state a claim, and Roland was given limited leave to amend.⁷ Roland timely filed an amended complaint,⁸ which is now the operative pleading.

II. STANDARDS OF REVIEW Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii), a court “shall dismiss” an in forma pauperis case or claim “at any time if the court determines that... the action... ² See Doc. 1. ³ See Doc. 9; Doc. 12 at 5. ⁴ See generally Doc. 1. ⁵ Id. at 2-3. ⁶ Although Roland is no longer incarcerated, when he filed his complaint, he was imprisoned at SCI Phoenix.

See Doc. 1 at 3. Thus, Section 1915A applied at initial screening. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). Review of the complaint was also appropriate under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e), as Roland is proceeding in forma pauperis. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). 7 See generally Docs. 14, 15. 8 Doc.

16. fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted[.]”⁹ This language closely tracks Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). Accordingly, courts apply the same standard of review to Section 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) as they utilize when resolving a motion to dismiss under Rule 12(b)(6).¹⁰ In deciding a Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss, courts should not inquire “whether a plaintiff will ultimately prevail but whether the claimant is entitled to offer evidence to support the claims.”¹¹ The court must accept as true the factual allegations in the complaint and draw all reasonable inferences from them in the light most favorable to the plaintiff.¹² In addition to the facts alleged on the face of the complaint, the court may also consider “exhibits attached to the complaint, matters of public record, as well as undisputedly authentic documents” attached to a defendant’s motion to dismiss if the plaintiff’s claims are based upon these documents.¹³ When the sufficiency of a complaint is challenged, the court must conduct a three-step inquiry.¹⁴ At step one, the court must “tak[e] note of the elements [the] 9 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii).

10 See *Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 109-10 & n.11 (3d Cir. 2002); *Allah v. Seiverling*, 229 F.3d 220, 223 (3d Cir. 2000). 11 *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974); see *Nami v. Fauver*, 82 F.3d 63, 66 (3d Cir. 1996). 12 *Phillips v. County of Allegheny*, 515 F.3d 224, 229 (3d Cir. 2008). 13 *Mayer v. Belichick*, 605 F.3d 223, 230 (3d Cir. 2010) (citing *Pension Benefit Guar.*

Corp. v. White Consol. Indus., 998 F.2d 1192, 1196 (3d Cir. 1993)). 14 *Connelly v. Lane Const. Corp.*, 809 F.3d 780, 787 (3d Cir. 2016) (internal citations and quotation marks omitted) (footnote omitted). plaintiff must plead to state a claim.”¹⁵ Second, the court should distinguish well-pleaded factual allegations—which must be taken as true—from mere legal conclusions, which “are not entitled to the assumption of truth” and may be disregarded.¹⁶ Finally, the court must review the presumed-truthful allegations “and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.”¹⁷ Deciding plausibility is a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.”¹⁸ Because Roland proceeds pro se, his pleadings are to be liberally construed and his amended complaint, “however inartfully pleaded, must be held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers[.]”¹⁹ III.

DISCUSSION In his amended complaint, Roland asserts a failure-to-protect claim under the Eighth Amendment against the following defendants: Wayne County Correctional Facility, Warden Randal Williams, Deputy Warden John Masco, Lieutenant Paul Soccodoto, Acting Sergeant Scott Jaycox, and Correctional Officer Walker Carney.²⁰ Roland generally provides well-pleaded

allegations, but several 15 *Id.* (quoting *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 675 (2009) (alterations in original)).

16 *Id.* (quoting *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679). 17 *Id.* (quoting *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679). 18 *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 681. 19 *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (*per curiam*) (citations omitted). 20 See generally *Doc. 16*; *id.* ¶¶ 2-7. of his claims are still insufficient.

The Court will address Roland's pleading deficiencies in turn. A. "Person" for Section 1983 To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege "the violation of a right secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States, and must show that the alleged deprivation was committed by a person acting under color of state law."²¹ Only "persons" are subject to suit under Section 1983, and entities such as prisons, medical departments, or private medical companies generally do not qualify as "persons" for purposes of Section 1983.²² Under this well-settled law, any Section 1983 claim against Wayne County Correctional Facility must be dismissed, as this county prison is not a person subject to Section 1983 liability.

Moreover, Roland does not allege an unconstitutional policy or custom by this entity such that a Section 1983 suit could 21 *Rehberg v. Paulk*, 566 U.S. 356, 361 (2012) (emphasis added) (citing *Imbler v. Pachtman*, 424 U.S. 409, 417 (1976) (citing 42 U.S.C. § 1983)). 22 See *Will v. Mich. Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 64-65, 71 (1989) (explaining that a state is not a "person" for Section 1983 purposes); *Fischer v. Cahill*, 474 F.2d 991, 992 (3d Cir.

1973) (holding that "New Jersey Prison Medical Department" was a state agency and not a "person" under Section 1983); *Slagle v. County of Clarion*, 435 F.3d 262, 264 n.3 (3d Cir. 2006) (affirming on other grounds and observing that district court properly "dismissed Clarion County Jail as a defendant in this case," quoting district court's reasoning that "'it is well established in the Third Circuit that a prison is not a "person" subject to suit under federal civil rights laws'"); *Stankowski v. Farley*, 487 F. Supp. 2d 543, 554 (M.D.

Pa. 2007) (finding that PrimeCare Medical is not a "person for purposes of Section 1983" and thus not subject to liability under that statute); *Foye v. Wexford Health Sources Inc.*, 675 F. App'x 210, 215 (3d Cir. 2017) (nonprecedential) (dismissing Section 1983 claims against prison and Department of Corrections because they "are not persons subject to suit under" Section 1983). be maintained against it through its connection with the municipal government.²³ Thus, Wayne County Correctional Facility will be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

B. Eighth Amendment Failure to Protect "Being violently assaulted in prison is simply not part of the penalty that criminal offenders pay for their offenses against society."²⁴ Prison officials, therefore, have "a duty to protect prisoners from violence at the hands of other prisoners."²⁵ However, not "every injury suffered by one prisoner at the hands of another... translates into

constitutional liability for prison officials responsible for the victim's safety.”²⁶ To plead an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim against a prison official, the inmate must plausibly allege that “(1) he was incarcerated under conditions posing a substantial risk of serious harm, (2) the official was deliberately indifferent to that substantial risk to [the prisoner's] health and safety, and (3) the official's deliberate indifference caused [the prisoner] harm.”²⁷ In this context, deliberate indifference is a subjective standard; that is, “the prison official- defendant must actually have known or been aware of the excessive risk to inmate ²³ See, e.g., *Natale v. Camden Cnty.*

Corr. Facility, 318 F.3d 575, 583-84 (3d Cir. 2003). ²⁴ *Bistran v. Levi*, 696 F.3d 352, 366 (3d Cir. 2012), abrogated on other grounds by *Mack v. Yost*, 968 F.3d 311 (3d Cir. 2020) (quoting *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994)). ²⁵ *Id.* (alteration in original) (quoting *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 833). ²⁶ *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 834. ²⁷ *Bistran*, 696 F.3d at 367. safety.”²⁸ Actual knowledge or awareness of a substantial risk to an inmate's safety can be proven “in the usual ways, including inference from circumstantial evidence.”²⁹ Roland alleges that on March 1, 2024, he was attacked by inmate Michael Casabianca, who had a well-known history of mental health and behavior issues.³⁰ He alleges that he sustained serious injuries to his jaw and teeth, with a surgical quote of \$30,000 to repair the damage.³¹ Roland's amended complaint plausibly states a failure-to-protect claim against Warden Williams, Deputy Warden Masco, and Lieutenant Soccodoto.

He alleges that he and other prisoners repeatedly alerted these prison officials to the danger posed by Michael Casabianca, that they were actually aware of the risk posed by this inmate, and that they failed to take any action to prevent the March 1 assault.³² Roland's failure-to-protect claims against Acting Sergeant Jaycox and Correctional Officer Carney fall short.

Roland alleges that on the day of the assault, he was “left in the day room” by Carney, “instead of being secured according to established prison policy.”³³ This single allegation fails to show that ²⁸ *Id.* (quoting *Beers-Capitol v. Whetzel*, 256 F.3d 120, 125 (3d Cir. 2001)). ²⁹ *Id.* (quoting *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 842). ³⁰ See Doc. 1 at 7; Doc. 16 ¶¶ 11, 24, 26.

³¹ See Doc. 16 ¶¶ 26-28. ³² See *id.* ¶¶ 11-23. ³³ *Id.* ¶ 24. Carney was subjectively aware of the danger posed by Casabianca to Roland, or that Carney acted with deliberate indifference to that danger. At most, Roland's allegation against Carney sounds in negligence, which does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation. Roland next alleges that Acting Sergeant Jaycox was the “supervising sergeant” and “failed to ensure that CO Carney followed proper security protocols, contributing to the unsafe environment.”³⁴ This allegation, too, is insufficient to plead a failure-to-protect claim.

Again, it does not show that Jaycox knew of the danger posed by Casabianca to Roland, nor does it show that Jaycox acted with deliberate indifference toward that danger. Additionally, Roland's single allegation against Jaycox attempts to assert respondeat superior liability (or vicarious

liability) for the actions of Carney, which liability does not exist for Section 1983 claims.³⁵ Roland's failure-to-protect claims against Carney and Jaycox, therefore, will be dismissed under Section 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted.

His Eighth Amendment claims against Williams, Masco, and Soccodoto may go forward. 34 Id. ¶ 25. 35 See *Dooley v. Wetzel*, 957 F.3d 366, 374 (3d Cir. 2020). C. Leave to Amend Generally, "plaintiffs who file complaints subject to dismissal under [the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995] should receive leave to amend unless amendment would be inequitable or futile."³⁶ Further leave to amend will be denied because Roland has failed to cure the deficiencies with his pleadings even after "amendments previously allowed."³⁷ This case, therefore, will continue only as to Roland's Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claims against defendants Williams, Masco, and Soccodoto.

IV. CONCLUSION Based on the foregoing, the Court will dismiss in part Roland's amended complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. An appropriate Order follows. BY THE COURT: s/ Matthew W. Brann Matthew W. Brann Chief United States District Judge 36 Grayson, 293 F.3d at 114. 37 See *Foman v. Davis*, 371 U.S. 178, 182 (1962); *Jones v. Unknown D.O.C.*

Bus Driver & Transp. Crew, 944 F.3d 478, 483 (3d Cir. 2019) (concluding that, where inmate plaintiff "has already had two chances to tell his story," providing "further leave to amend would be futile").