

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
MISSOURI, EASTERN DIVISION

Matanzo v. St. Charles County Jail, et al.

Matanzo · No. 4:26-cv-00063-ACL · Decided May 11, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri granted Karlo A. Matanzo’s application to proceed in forma pauperis but dismissed his § 1983 complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim. The court held that the St. Charles County Jail and St. Charles County Court were not suable entities and that the allegations did not establish municipal liability against St. Charles County under Monell.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, Eastern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Stephen N. Limbaugh, Jr.
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, Eastern Division
DECIDED	May 11, 2026
DOCKET	4:26-cv-00063-ACL
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A self-represented pretrial detainee sought leave to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. On initial screening, the district court dismissed the complaint without prejudice for failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), an in forma pauperis complaint must be dismissed if it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim. The court applies the Rule 12(b)(6)-type plausibility standard, accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true, gives a pro se complaint liberal construction, and does not accept conclusory allegations or supply facts not pleaded.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished

PARTIES

Karlo A. Matanzo v. St. Charles County Jail, St. Charles County Court, et al.

TOPICS

section 1983 prisoners rights municipal liability eleventh amendment immunity civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights prisoner civil rights municipal liability federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether St. Charles County Jail and St. Charles County Court are suable entities under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. Whether the complaint states a § 1983 claim against St. Charles County under a municipal-policy, custom, or failure-to-train-or-supervise theory.
3. Whether the complaint was subject to dismissal on initial review under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).

HOLDINGS

1. A county jail is not a distinctly suable legal entity under § 1983.
2. A state circuit court is not a suable entity under § 1983 and is protected from such suits by state immunity under the Eleventh Amendment.
3. The complaint fails to state a § 1983 claim against St. Charles County because it does not allege facts showing that a constitutional violation resulted from an official policy, unofficial custom, or deliberately indifferent failure to train or supervise.
4. The complaint must be dismissed without prejudice because it is legally frivolous and fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“An action fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted if it does not plead “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.”” (Legal Standard on Initial Review)

“The only two defendants named in this case are not suable entities under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.” (Discussion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Matanzo, a pretrial detainee at the St. Charles County Jail, alleged several grievances, including denial of a 10% bond, delay in receiving a medically necessary device, inadequate medical care, threats from another inmate, blacked-out windows, and unspecified “cord issues.” He also alleged that a spider bit him and that he was taken to an emergency room 13 hours after developing a fever. He sought monetary damages and a bond reduction, but named only St. Charles County Jail and St. Charles County Court as defendants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Matanzo filed a § 1983 complaint against St. Charles County Jail and St. Charles County Court and moved to proceed without prepayment of filing fees. The court granted in forma pauperis status, screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), and dismissed the action without prejudice because the named defendants were not suable entities and the allegations did not establish municipal liability.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)
- Solomon v. Petray, 795 F.3d 777, 787 (8th Cir. 2015)
- Martin v. Aubuchon, 623 F.2d 1282, 1286 (8th Cir. 1980)
- Stone v. Harry, 364 F.3d 912, 914-15 (8th Cir. 2004)
- McNeil v. United States, 508 U.S. 106, 113 (1993)
- McLean v. Gordon, 548 F.3d 613, 618 (8th Cir. 2008)
- Ketchum v. City of West Memphis, Ark., 974 F.2d 81, 82 (8th Cir. 1992)
- Owens v. Scott Cty. Jail, 328 F.3d 1026, 1027 (8th Cir. 2003)
- De La Garza v. Kandiyohi Cty. Jail, 18 Fed. Appx. 436, 437 (8th Cir. 2001)
- Mildfelt v. Circuit Court of Jackson Cty., Mo., 827 F.2d 343, 345 (8th Cir. 1987)
- Harris v. Missouri Court of Appeals, Western Dist., 787 F.2d 427, 429 (8th Cir. 1986)
- Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs. of City of New York, 436 U.S. 658, 690 (1978)
- Kelly v. City of Omaha, Neb., 813 F.3d 1070, 1075 (8th Cir. 2016)
- Mick v. Raines, 883 F.3d 1075, 1079 (8th Cir. 2018)
- Marsh v. Phelps Cty., 902 F.3d 745, 751 (8th Cir. 2018)

OPINION

Matanzo

PER CURIAM.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

EASTERN DIVISION

KARLO A. MATANZO,)

) Plaintiff,)) v.) Case No. 4:26-cv-00063-ACL) ST. CHARLES COUNTY JAIL, et al.,))

Defendants.)

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the Court upon self-represented plaintiff Karlo A. Matanzo's application to proceed without prepayment of the required filing fees and cost. [Doc. 3]. Having reviewed the application and the financial information submitted in support, the Court will grant the application, waive prepayment of the filing fee, and permit plaintiff to proceed in forma pauperis. Because plaintiff is proceeding in forma pauperis, the Court must review his complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. Based on such review, the Court will dismiss the complaint for failure to state a claim. Legal Standard on Initial Review Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), the Court is required to dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if it is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted if it does not plead "enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). Determining whether a complaint states a plausible claim for relief is a context-specific task that requires the court to draw upon judicial experience and common sense. *Id.* at 679. The court must assume the veracity of well-pleaded facts but need not accept as true "[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements." *Id.* at 678 (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). When reviewing a pro se complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), the Court must give it the benefit of a liberal construction. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). A "liberal construction" means that if the essence of an allegation is discernible, the district court should construe the plaintiff's complaint in a way that permits his or her claim to be considered within the proper legal framework. *Solomon v. Petray*, 795 F.3d 777, 787 (8th Cir. 2015). However, even pro se complaints are required to allege facts which, if true, state a claim for relief as a matter of law. *Martin v. Aubuchon*, 623 F.2d 1282, 1286 (8th Cir. 1980); see also *Stone v. Harry*, 364 F.3d 912, 914-15 (8th Cir. 2004) (stating that federal courts are not required to "assume facts that are not alleged, just because an additional factual allegation would have formed a stronger complaint"). In addition, affording a pro se complaint the benefit of a liberal construction does not mean that procedural rules in ordinary civil litigation must be interpreted so as to excuse mistakes by those who proceed without counsel. See *McNeil v. United States*, 508 U.S. 106, 113 (1993). The Complaint Plaintiff is a pretrial detainee currently held in the St. Charles County Jail. On January 14, 2026, plaintiff filed the instant action against St. Charles County Jail and St. Charles County Court. [Doc. 1]. Plaintiff lists a variety of complaints, including being denied a 10% bond, "delay and denial of medically necessary device," lack of appropriate care, being threatened by an inmate, and not seeing the sun due to blacked-out windows. [*Id.* at 3-4]. He also states he has been experiencing "cord issues." [*Id.*]. Regarding

injuries, he alleges that he was bitten by a spider and was taken to the emergency room 13 hours after developing a fever. [Id. at 4]. He requests monetary damages and a bond reduction. [Id. at 5].

Discussion Based on a careful review and liberal construction of the filings before the Court, the Court will dismiss this action. The sole defendants here are St. Charles County Jail and St. Charles County Court. “Section 1983 provides for an action against a ‘person’ for a violation, under color of law, of another’s civil rights.” *McLean v. Gordon*, 548 F.3d 613, 618 (8th Cir. 2008). A jail, however, is not a distinctly suable entity under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. See *Ketchum v. City of West Memphis, Ark.*, 974 F.2d 81, 82 (1992); *Owens v. Scott Cty. Jail*, 328 F.3d 1026, 1027 (8th Cir. 2003) (“county jails are not legal entities amenable to suit”); *De La Garza v. Kandiyohi Cty. Jail*, 18 Fed. Appx. 436, 437 (8th Cir. 2001) (affirming district court dismissal of county jail and sheriff’s department because they are not suable entities). Further, plaintiff’s claims against the St. Charles County Courts are not cognizable because the Circuit Court cannot legally be sued. See *Ketchum v. City of W. Memphis, Ark.*, 974 F.2d at 82 (departments or subdivisions of local government are not “juridical entities suable as such.”). Further, state courts are not vulnerable to suits under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 because they are protected by Eleventh Amendment immunity. *Mildfelt v. Circuit Court of Jackson Cty., Mo.*, 827 F.2d 343, 345 (8th Cir. 1987); see also *Harris v. Missouri Court of Appeals, Western Dist.*, 787 F.2d 427, 429 (8th Cir. 1986) (stating that “courts as entities are not vulnerable to § 1983 suits, because they are protected by state immunity under the eleventh amendment”). The only two defendants named in this case are not suable entities under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Consequently, plaintiff’s complaint is legally frivolous and fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. To the extent the plaintiff intends to bring this case against St. Charles County, his complaint still falls short. A local governing body can be sued directly under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. *Monell v. Dep’t of Soc. Servs. of City of New York*, 436 U.S. 658, 690 (1978). To prevail on this type of claim, a plaintiff must establish the governmental entity’s liability for the alleged conduct. *Kelly v. City of Omaha, Neb.*, 813 F.3d 1070, 1075 (8th Cir. 2016). Such liability may attach if the constitutional violation “resulted from (1) an official municipal policy, (2) an unofficial custom, or (3) a deliberately indifferent failure to train or supervise.” *Mick v. Raines*, 883 F.3d 1075, 1079 (8th Cir. 2018); see also *Marsh v. Phelps Cty.*, 902 F.3d 745, 751 (8th Cir. 2018) (recognizing “claims challenging an unconstitutional policy or custom, or those based on a theory of inadequate training, which is an extension of the same”). Here, plaintiff has failed to provide any facts that would establish liability under *Monell*. Plaintiff has not alleged any facts supporting the proposition that an unconstitutional policy or custom exists. He merely lists several grievances with little to no factual detail or support. This does not indicate any unconstitutional policy or custom. Further, plaintiff has provided no allegations or facts indicating a deliberately indifferent failure to train or supervise. Thus, plaintiff’s complaint fails to state a claim against St. Charles County. Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff’s motion to proceed without prepayment of the required filing fees and costs (Doc. 3) is GRANTED. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this action is DISMISSED without prejudice for

failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. IT IS HEREBY CERTIFIED that an appeal from this dismissal would not be taken in good faith. An Order of Dismissal will accompany this Memorandum and Order. SO ORDERED on this 11th day of May, 2026.

STEPHEN N. LIMBAUGH, “

SENIOR UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE