

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

Christopher Rodriguez v. Brandon Johndro, et al.

Civil No. 3:23-cv-01258 (TOF) (D. Conn. Jan. 31, 2026) · No. 3:23-cv-01258 (TOF) · Decided January 31, 2026

SUMMARY

The court rules on Plaintiff Christopher Rodriguez’s motion in limine seeking to exclude evidence of his criminal convictions and the transcript of his state criminal trial. The court permits the defendants to elicit the names and dates of the convictions and the sentences imposed under Federal Rule of Evidence 609, but excludes details of the offenses and proposed Exhibit 508 on the current record under Rule 403. The ruling is without prejudice to renewal if developments at trial alter the evidentiary balance.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Connecticut
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Thomas O. Farrish
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Connecticut
DECIDED	January 31, 2026
DOCKET	3:23-cv-01258 (TOF)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved in limine to preclude defendants from introducing evidence of his criminal convictions and from introducing the transcript of his state criminal trial. The district court ruled on the motion before trial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The admissibility ruling under Federal Rules of Evidence 609 and 403 is committed to the district court's sound discretion and requires an individualized balancing of probative value against unfair prejudice and related Rule 403 concerns.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished, nonprecedential district-court ruling
PARTIES	Christopher Rodriguez v. Brandon Johndro, Michaela Muller, Jerry Chrostowski

TOPICS

evidence

impeachment

civil rights

section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

evidence

civil rights

constitutional torts

excessive force

trial procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Rule 609(a)(1) and Rule 403 permitted defendants to introduce the names, dates, and sentences of Rodriguez's felony convictions for impeachment.
2. Whether defendants could introduce details underlying Rodriguez's convictions or his complete state criminal trial transcript as impeachment or substantive evidence.
3. Whether the ruling excluding the criminal trial transcript should be without prejudice to renewal if Rodriguez opened the door at trial.

HOLDINGS

1. Under Rule 609(a)(1)(A), subject to Rule 403, defendants may elicit the names and dates of Rodriguez's convictions and the sentences imposed because the individualized balancing of probative value and prejudice favors admission.
2. On the current record, defendants may not introduce or elicit the underlying details of Rodriguez's criminal offenses for impeachment.
3. Defendants may not introduce proposed Exhibit 508, the transcript of Rodriguez's criminal trial, on the current record because its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice.
4. The exclusion of Exhibit 508 and the details of the convictions is without prejudice to defendants' right to renew their request if trial developments, including Rodriguez's testimony, materially alter the Rule 403 balance or cause him to open the door.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Rule 609(a)(1) “presumes that all felonies are at least somewhat probative of a witness’s propensity to testify truthfully,” “all . . . felonies are not equally probative of credibility.”” (Section II.A)

“The “circumstances of those crimes” show that they are also “abuse[s] of trust” that are “highly probative of credibility.”” (Section II.A)

“Impeachment by criminal conviction is typically “limited to ‘elicitation of the crime charged, the date, and the disposition,’ and ‘it is error to elicit any further information for impeachment purposes.’”” (Section II.B)

“The concept of “opening the door,” or “curative admissibility,” gives the trial court discretion to permit a party to introduce otherwise inadmissible evidence on an issue” (Section II.B)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Rodriguez, an inmate in Connecticut custody, was tried in New Britain Superior Court on four felony offenses arising from alleged sexual abuse of a minor. During that trial, Rodriguez allegedly stood and spoke to the jury,

after which his attorney covered his mouth and nose and three courtroom state employees physically intervened. Rodriguez alleges that the defendants used excessive force, including a chokehold, grabbing his arm, and tackling and twisting his arm; portions of the altercation were not captured on video, making his credibility important to the civil trial.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Rodriguez brought a civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and related state-law assault and battery claims based on an alleged excessive-force incident during his criminal trial. Before the scheduled civil trial, he moved to exclude evidence of four felony convictions and the transcript of the criminal proceeding. The court granted the motion in part and denied it in part, ruling that defendants could elicit the names, dates, and sentences of the convictions but could not introduce the convictions' underlying details or proposed Exhibit 508 on the current record.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- United States v. Estrada, 430 F.3d 606, 616-18, 621 (2d Cir. 2005)
- Twitty v. Ashcroft, No. 3:04-cv-410 (DFM), 2010 WL 1677757, at *1-*2 (D. Conn. Apr. 23, 2010)
- Daniels v. Loizzo, 986 F. Supp. 245, 250 (S.D.N.Y. 1997)
- United States v. Brown, 606 F. Supp. 2d 306, 312 (E.D.N.Y. 2009)
- Harnage v. Lightner, No. 3:17-cv-263 (AWT), 2022 WL 1104908, at *1 (D. Conn. Apr. 13, 2022)
- Harnage v. Pillai, No. 3:17-cv-357, slip op. at 3-5 (D. Conn. May 8, 2019)
- Balentine v. Shurgot, No. 9:22-cv-285 (MAD/ML), 2023 WL 6622034, at *4 (N.D.N.Y. Oct. 11, 2023)
- Wine v. Black, No. 3:18-cv-704 (VAB), 2024 WL 2809200, at *10 (D. Conn. May 17, 2024)
- Stephen v. Hanley, No. 03-cv-6226 (KAM) (LB), 2009 WL 1471180, at *5 (E.D.N.Y. May 21, 2009)
- Shih v. Petal Card, Inc., No. 18-cv-5495 (JFK) (BCM), 2021 WL 5279395, at *4 (S.D.N.Y. Nov. 12, 2021)
- Zulu v. Barnhart, No. 9:16-cv-1408 (MAD/ML), 2019 WL 3239397, at *2 (N.D.N.Y. July 18, 2019)
- Smith v. Perez, No. 3:19-cv-1758 (VAB), 2023 WL 454049, at *4 (D. Conn. July 14, 2023)
- Day v. Milling, No. 3:95-cv-1704 (JGM), 2000 WL 435430, at *2 (D. Conn. Feb. 22, 2000)
- Gora v. Costa, 971 F.2d 1325, 1330 (7th Cir. 1992)
- Giles v. Rhodes, No. 94-Civ.-6385 (CSH), 2000 WL 1510004, at *1 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 10, 2000)
- Leniart v. Bundy, No. 3:09-cv-9 (HBF), 2013 WL 1673025, at *6 (D. Conn. Apr. 17, 2013)
- United States v. Rea, 958 F.2d 1206, 1225 (2d Cir. 1992)