

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Christopher Eduardo Sanchez v. Felipe Fernandez, et al.

No. 2:25-cv-02445 CKD (PS) (E.D. Cal. Sept. 22, 2025) · No. 2:25-cv-02445 CKD (PS) · Decided September 24, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California grants Christopher Eduardo Sanchez's application to proceed in forma pauperis in a civil rights action arising from a motorcycle accident and alleged conduct by a California Highway Patrol officer. The court finds that the complaint states cognizable federal and state claims and orders service on Officer Felipe Fernandez and the California Highway Patrol. The order directs the United States Marshal and the plaintiff to complete specified service-related steps.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 24, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-02445 CKD (PS)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Pro se plaintiff filed a civil rights complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and applied to proceed in forma pauperis. The court screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), found cognizable claims, granted in forma pauperis status, and directed service.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2), the court may dismiss an action that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. Under Rule 12(b)(6), a complaint must allege a cognizable legal theory and sufficient facts to support it. Pro se pleadings are liberally construed.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court screening order; generally nonprecedential.

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- section 1983
- service of process
- due process
- constitutional law

PRACTICE AREAS

Civil procedure

Civil rights

Constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiff demonstrated inability to prepay fees or provide security sufficient to proceed in forma pauperis under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a).
2. Whether plaintiff's complaint stated cognizable claims for purposes of screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
3. Whether service should be ordered on CHP Officer Felipe Fernandez and the California Highway Patrol.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiff's application to proceed in forma pauperis was granted because he submitted the affidavit required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a) showing that he was unable to prepay fees and costs or provide security.
2. For purposes of screening, plaintiff stated cognizable claims, so the action was not dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2).
3. Service was appropriate on CHP Officer Felipe Fernandez and the California Highway Patrol, and the United States Marshal was directed to serve the process without prepayment of costs.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The federal in forma pauperis statute authorizes federal courts to dismiss a case if the action is legally “frivolous or malicious,” fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.” (at 2)

“For purposes of screening, the court finds that plaintiff has stated cognizable claims.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that he suffered life-threatening internal bleeding and multiple fractures in a March 9, 2025 motorcycle accident on Highway 99. He alleged that CHP Officer Felipe Fernandez questioned him while he was in shock and unable to communicate coherently, delaying his transport to the hospital by three to five minutes, and that he later required emergency surgery. Plaintiff also alleged that a CHP accident report contained false or misleading statements and that the CHP improperly withheld records responsive to his California Public Records Act request.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed this action concerning a motorcycle accident and alleged constitutional, California civil rights, and California Public Records Act violations. He submitted an application to proceed in forma pauperis. After screening, the court granted the application, determined that plaintiff had stated cognizable claims for purposes of screening, and ordered service on Felipe Fernandez and the California Highway Patrol.

DISPOSITION

CASES CITED

- United Investors Life Ins. Co. v. Waddell & Reed Inc., 360 F.3d 960, 967 (9th Cir. 2004)
- Hebbe v. Pliler, 627 F.3d 338, 342 & n.7 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Swierkiewicz v. Sorema N.A., 534 U.S. 506, 514 (2002)
- Mollett v. Netflix, Inc., 795 F.3d 1062, 1065 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-57 (2007)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 CHRISTOPHER EDUARDO SANCHEZ, No. 2:25-cv-02445 CKD (PS) 12
Plaintiff, 13 v. ORDER 14 FELIPE FERNANDEZ, et al., 15 Defendants. 16 Plaintiff brings this
civil rights action against the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and 17 one of its officers,
defendant Fernandez, alleging constitutional violations with respect to a 18 motorcycle accident in
which plaintiff was seriously injured.

(ECF No. 1.) 19 Plaintiff is proceeding in this action pro se. Plaintiff has requested authority
pursuant to 20 28 U.S.C. § 1915 to proceed in forma pauperis. (ECF No. 2.) This proceeding was
referred to 21 this court by Local Rule 302(c)(21). 22 Plaintiff has submitted the affidavit required
by § 1915(a) showing that plaintiff is unable 23 to prepay fees and costs or give security for them.

Accordingly, the request to proceed in forma 24 pauperis will be granted. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). 25
The federal in forma pauperis statute authorizes federal courts to dismiss a case if the 26 action is
legally “frivolous or malicious,” fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, 27 or
seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.

28 U.S.C. 28 1 § 1915(e)(2). Further, the federal court has an independent duty to ensure it has
subject matter 2 jurisdiction in the case. See United Investors Life Ins. Co. v. Waddell & Reed
Inc., 360 F.3d 960, 3 967 (9th Cir. 2004). 4 Pro se pleadings are to be liberally construed. Hebbe v.
Pliler, 627 F.3d 338, 342 & n.7 5 (9th Cir. 2010) (liberal construction appropriate even post-Iqbal).

Rule 8(a) requires that a 6 pleading be “(1) a short and plain statement of the grounds for the
court’s jurisdiction...; (2) a 7 short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is
entitled to relief; and (3) a 8 demand for the relief sought, which may include relief in the
alternative or different types of 9 relief.” Each allegation must be simple, concise, and direct.

Rule 8(d)(1); see Swierkiewicz v. 10 Sorema N.A., 534 U.S. 506, 514 (2002) (overruled on other
grounds) (“Rule 8(a) is the starting 11 point of a simplified pleading system, which was adopted to
focus litigation on the merits of a 12 claim.”). 13 A complaint may be dismissed under Rule 12(b)

(6) for failure to state a claim. A 14 complaint fails to state a claim if it either lacks a cognizable legal theory or sufficient facts to 15 allege a cognizable legal theory.

Mollett v. Netflix, Inc., 795 F.3d 1062, 1065 (9th Cir. 2015). 16 To avoid dismissal for failure to state a claim, a complaint must contain more than “naked 17 assertions,” “labels and conclusions,” or “a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of 18 action.” Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-57 (2007). 19 Here, plaintiff alleges he was involved in a March 9, 2025 motorcycle accident on 20 Highway 99 and suffered life-threatening internal bleeding and multiple fractures.

He alleges that 21 defendant Fernandez questioned him about the accident when he was in shock and unable to 22 provide “voluntary or coherent statements” and that this questioning delayed his transport to the 23 hospital by “three to five minutes, during which time Plaintiff’s internal bleeding continued and 24 his medical condition deteriorated.” (Cmplt, ¶ 18.)

Plaintiff was transported to the hospital and 25 underwent emergency surgery. He alleges that the CHP report about the accident “contained 26 numerous false and misleading statements” and omitted that plaintiff “was unresponsive and 27 unable to communicate coherently” due to his injuries. (Id., ¶¶ 21, 22.) Plaintiff further alleges 28 that, in a response to a July 29, 2025, California Public Records Act (CPRA) request seeking all 1 records and digital evidence related to the accident, the CHP improperly withheld certain records 2 and did not comply with the Act’s requirements.

3 Plaintiff asserts federal constitutional claims pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He claims that 4 defendant Fernandez violated his Fourth Amendment right against unreasonable seizure, his 5 Eighth Amendment protection against deliberate indifference to serious medical needs, and his 6 Fourteenth Amendment due process rights. Plaintiff claims that defendant CHP is liable for 7 inadequate training and supervision and violation of the CPRA, and that both defendants violated 8 California civil rights law.

For purposes of screening, the court finds that plaintiff has stated 9 cognizable claims. 10 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 11 1. Plaintiff’s application to proceed in forma pauperis (ECF No. 2) is GRANTED; 12 2. Service is appropriate on defendant CHP Officer Felipe Fernandez, Badge #021241 13 and the California Highway Patrol. 14 3.

The United States Marshal is directed to serve within ninety days of the date of this 15 order, all process pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 4(i), including a copy of this court’s order 16 setting status conference, without prepayment of costs. 17 4.

The Clerk of the Court shall send plaintiff one USM-285 form for each defendant, one 18 summons, a copy of the complaint, and this court’s order setting status conference. 19 5. Plaintiff is directed to provide to the United States Marshal (501 I St., 5th Floor, 20 Sacramento, CA

95814), within fourteen days from the date this order is filed, all 21 information needed by the Marshal to effect service of process, including all 22 information required for proper service of summons under Federal Rule of Civil 23 Procedure 4 and shall file a statement with the court that said documents have been 24 submitted to the United States Marshal, along with a copy of the information provided 25 to the Marshal.

The court anticipates that, to effect service, the U.S. Marshal will 26 require at least: 27 a. One completed summons for each defendant; 28 b. One completed USM-285 form for each defendant;] c. One copy of the endorsed filed complaint for each defendant, with an extra 2 copy for the U.S. Marshal; 3 d. One copy of the instant order for each defendant. 4 6.

Inthe event the U.S. Marshal is unable, for any reason whatsoever, to effectuate 5 service on any defendant within 90 days from the date of this order, the Marshal is 6 directed to report that fact, and the reasons for it, to the undersigned. 7 7.

The Clerk of the Court is directed to serve a copy of this order on the United States 8 Marshal, 501 "I" Street, Sacramento, Ca., 95814, Tel. No. (916) 930-2030. 9 Dated: September 22, 2025 / a8 } i | / p, {a ce 11 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 12 13 14 15 16 || 2/sanc2445.ifp-serve 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28