

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA

De'Shay Jarnaize Hackner v. Stephen C. Johns, Operations, IDOC
Commissioner

Hackner v. Johns · No. 2:25-cv-00377-JPH-MJD · Decided April 1, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana dismissed De'Shay Hackner's amended prisoner civil-rights complaint. The court held that the constitutional claims were barred by Indiana's two-year statute of limitations and, alternatively, failed to state viable equal-protection or PREA-related claims. The court dismissed the federal claims with prejudice, declined supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law claims, and dismissed those claims without prejudice.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Pat James Patrick Hanlon
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana
DECIDED	April 1, 2026
DOCKET	2:25-cv-00377-JPH-MJD
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court screened the plaintiff's amended prisoner civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed the federal constitutional claims with prejudice and the state-law claims without prejudice, directing entry of final judgment.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must dismiss claims that are frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. The failure-to-state-a-claim inquiry applies the same standard as a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, accepting well-pleaded facts and requiring enough facts to state a facially plausible claim; pro se pleadings are construed liberally.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; nonprecedential
PARTIES	De'Shay Jarnaize Hackner v. Stephen C. Johns, Officer Harbaugh, PREA Coordinator Jane Doe, Warden Hyatte, Director of Operation,

TOPICS

statute of limitations section 1983 equal protection motions to dismiss civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights prisoner litigation civil procedure constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the plaintiff's federal constitutional claims were barred by Indiana's two-year statute of limitations.
2. Whether the amended complaint stated a Fourteenth Amendment equal-protection claim against the correctional and PREA officials.
3. Whether the alleged failure to investigate a PREA complaint stated a claim under the PREA or 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
4. Whether the court should exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the remaining state-law claims after dismissing all federal claims.
5. Whether the plaintiff should receive another opportunity to amend.

HOLDINGS

1. The federal constitutional claims were dismissed with prejudice because the allegations showed that the claims accrued more than two years before the action and the complaint provided no basis for tolling.
2. The amended complaint failed to state an equal-protection claim because it did not allege that the plaintiff was treated differently from a similarly situated person outside the protected class or that the defendants acted with discriminatory purpose.
3. The alleged failure to conduct a proper PREA investigation did not state a claim because the PREA creates no private cause of action and § 1983 does not provide a freestanding constitutional right to a PREA investigation.
4. The court declined to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the state-law defamation claims and dismissed them without prejudice after dismissing all federal claims.
5. The plaintiff was not entitled to another opportunity to amend because any federal claim was clearly barred by the statute of limitations.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“When screening a complaint, the Court must dismiss any portion that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim for relief, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief.”

“To determine whether the complaint states a claim, the Court applies the same standard as when addressing a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6).”

“Although untimeliness is an affirmative defense, a complaint can be dismissed sua sponte if a valid affirmative defense is so plain from the face of the complaint that the suit is frivolous.”

“though PREA is a federal law, it does not create a private cause of action.”

“There also is no “freestanding constitutional right to [a PREA] investigation under § 1983.””

“Indeed, when the federal claims are dismissed before trial, there is a presumption that the court will relinquish jurisdiction over any remaining state law claims.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The plaintiff, an Indiana prisoner, alleged that inmate Stephen Johns falsely accused him of sexual assault arising from a March 21, 2020 incident at Miami Correctional Facility. He claimed that correctional and PREA officials failed to investigate adequately because of racial and security-threat-group-related bias, allowing Johns to file a lawsuit containing the allegedly false accusations. The plaintiff alleged resulting stress and embarrassment and asserted Fourteenth Amendment equal-protection claims and state-law defamation and intentional-infliction-of-emotional-distress claims.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The plaintiff filed an original complaint alleging defamation and constitutional violations. On February 9, 2026, the court screened and dismissed the federal claims as time-barred and for failure to state a claim against the IDOC Commissioner, while dismissing the state-law claims without prejudice and ordering the plaintiff to show cause why final judgment should not enter. The plaintiff responded with an amended complaint, which the court screened and dismissed in this order.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Schillinger v. Kiley, 954 F.3d 990, 993 (7th Cir. 2020)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Cesal v. Moats, 851 F.3d 714, 720 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Richards v. Mitcheff, 696 F.3d 635, 637 (7th Cir. 2012)
- Baldwin v. Raemisch, 788 F. App'x 390, 392 (7th Cir. 2019)
- Muhammad-Ali v. Final Call, Inc., 832 F.3d 755 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Cannon v. Newport, 850 F.3d 303, 307-08 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Alston v. City of Madison, 853 F.3d 901, 906 (7th Cir. 2017)
- McRae v. Myers, No. 22-1821, 2023 WL 2423590, at *3 (7th Cir. Mar. 9, 2023), cert. denied
- Bracy v. Tully, No. 1:22-CV-827, 2022 WL 3229325, at *3-4 (E.D. Va. Aug. 10, 2022)

- Carlsbad Tech., Inc. v. HIF Bio, Inc., 556 U.S. 635, 639 (2009)
- Ex rel. Dietchweiler v. Lucas, 827 F.3d 622, 631 (7th Cir. 2016)

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