

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
PENNSYLVANIA

Mitchell v. Wieland

No. 1:25-CV-00012-RAL (W.D. Pa. June 6, 2026) · No. 1:25-CV-00012-RAL · Decided June 5, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania ruled on Defendants’ partial motion to dismiss Jamir Mitchell’s pro se civil rights complaint arising from the alleged use of oleoresin capsicum spray at SCI-Forest. The court dismissed with prejudice official-capacity claims for monetary relief and dismissed other claims, including failure to train, retaliation, conspiracy, and ADA claims, without prejudice and with leave to amend. The court denied dismissal of Mitchell’s Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim against Defendant Best and left his excessive-force claim unaffected.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Richard A. Lanzillo
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania
DECIDED	June 5, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-CV-00012-RAL
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss certain claims in Mitchell's pro se § 1983 and ADA complaint. The court granted the motion in part and denied it in part.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true and views them in the light most favorable to the plaintiff, but need not accept unsupported inferences or legal conclusions. The complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a plausible claim for relief.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

PARTIES

Jamir Mitchell v. Capt. Wieland, Lt. Fiedor, Sgt. Kemp, C.O. Crose, C.O. Young, Superintendent R. Irwin, CERT Team, John Does 1-10/Jane Doe, LPN Crystal Best, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

section 1983

prisoners rights

ada / disability

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

disability discrimination

civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether monetary-damages claims against defendants in their official capacities are barred by Eleventh Amendment immunity.
2. Whether Mitchell plausibly alleged personal involvement by supervisory defendants Irwin and Wieland in an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect or failure-to-train claim.
3. Whether Mitchell plausibly alleged a First Amendment retaliation claim.
4. Whether Mitchell plausibly alleged a Fourteenth Amendment conspiracy under § 1983.
5. Whether Mitchell plausibly alleged an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim against Defendant Best based on authorization of OC spray despite his asthma and prior collapsed lung.
6. Whether Mitchell plausibly alleged a Title II ADA discrimination claim.
7. Whether Mitchell's Eighth Amendment excessive-force claim against Fiedor and the Doe defendants should be dismissed.

HOLDINGS

1. Claims for monetary damages against the defendants in their official capacities are barred by the Eleventh Amendment and were dismissed with prejudice.
2. Mitchell failed to state a plausible claim against Irwin and Wieland because he alleged only generalized and conclusory assertions that they knew of prior OC-spray and excessive-force incidents and failed to train subordinates.
3. Mitchell failed to state a First Amendment retaliation claim against any defendant.
4. The complaint plausibly stated an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim against Best, so dismissal of that claim was denied.
5. Mitchell failed to state a § 1983 conspiracy claim against any defendant.
6. Mitchell failed to state a Title II ADA claim because he did not allege exclusion from, denial of the benefits of, or discrimination concerning a prison service, program, or activity by reason of disability.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“a complaint should only be dismissed pursuant to Rule 12(b)(6) if it fails to allege “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.”” (at 3)

“Allegations of participation or actual knowledge and acquiescence, however, must be made with appropriate particularity” (at 7)

“Because “the linchpin for conspiracy is agreement,” allegations of parallel or concerted conduct, without more, are insufficient.” (at 12)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mitchell, a Pennsylvania Department of Corrections inmate, alleged that Defendant Kemp instructed his cellmate to assault him in retaliation for a lawsuit against Kemp, and that other officers threatened and repeatedly deployed large amounts of OC spray into Mitchell's cell. Mitchell alleged that he had asthma, a history of a collapsed lung, and mental-health conditions, and that he was not promptly decontaminated and was later subjected to a shower restriction. He also alleged that supervisory officials knew of prior OC-spray and excessive-force problems but failed to train staff.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Mitchell filed a civil rights complaint arising from alleged use of oleoresin capsicum spray and related conduct at a Pennsylvania state prison. Defendants filed a partial motion to dismiss, which was fully briefed. The court dismissed official-capacity monetary claims with prejudice and dismissed several other claims without prejudice and with leave to amend, while allowing the deliberate-indifference claim against Best and the excessive-force claim against Fiedor and the Doe defendants to proceed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Kost v. Kozakiewicz, 1 F.3d 176, 183 (3d Cir. 1993)
- Phillips v. County of Allegheny, 515 F.3d 224, 228 (3d Cir. 2008)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555-56, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 677-78 (2009)
- Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Laskaris v. Thornburgh, 661 F.2d 23 (3d Cir. 1981)
- Mt. Healthy City Bd. of Ed. v. Doyle, 429 U.S. 274 (1977)
- Edelman v. Jordan, 415 U.S. 651 (1974)
- Will v. Mich. Dep't of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989)
- Oliver v. Beard, 358 F. App'x 297, 300 (3d Cir. 2009)
- Mearin v. Swartz, 951 F. Supp. 2d 776, 781-82 (W.D. Pa. 2013)

- Rode v. Dellarciprete, 845 F.2d 1195, 1207-08 (3d Cir. 1988)
- A.M. ex rel. J.M.K. v. Luzerne County Juvenile Detention Center, 372 F.3d 572, 586 (3d Cir. 2004)
- Watson v. Rozum, 834 F.3d 417, 422 (3d Cir. 2016)
- Rauser v. Horn, 241 F.3d 330, 333-34 (3d Cir. 2001)
- Allah v. Seiverling, 229 F.3d 220, 225 (3d Cir. 2000)
- Suppan v. Dadonna, 203 F.3d 228, 235 (3d Cir. 2000)
- Lauren W. ex rel. Jean W. v. DeFlaminis, 480 F.3d 259, 267 (3d Cir. 2007)
- Brightwell v. Lehman, 2007 WL 2479682, at *6 (W.D. Pa. Aug. 29, 2007), aff'd, 637 F.3d 187 (3d Cir. 2011)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97 (1976)
- Rouse v. Plantier, 182 F.3d 192, 197 (3d Cir. 1999)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 837 (1994)
- Durmer v. O'Carroll, 991 F.2d 64, 68 (3d Cir. 1993)
- White v. Napoleon, 897 F.2d 103, 109 (3d Cir. 1990)
- Lee v. Young, 533 F.3d 505, 510 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Parkway Garage, Inc. v. City of Philadelphia, 5 F.3d 685, 700 (3d Cir. 1993)
- United Artists Theatre Circuit, Inc. v. Township of Warrington, 316 F.3d 392 (3d Cir. 2003)
- Watson v. Secretary Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 436 F. App'x 131, 137 (3d Cir. 2011)
- Rogers v. Mount Union Borough ex rel. Zook, 816 F. Supp. 308, 314 (M.D. Pa. 1993)
- Grigsby v. Kane, 250 F. Supp. 2d 453, 458 (M.D. Pa. 2003)
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections v. Yeskey, 524 U.S. 206, 210 (1998)
- Haberle v. Troxell, 885 F.3d 170, 178-79 (3d Cir. 2018)
- Williams v. Secretary Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, 117 F.4th 503, 527 (3d Cir. 2024)
- Durham v. Kelley, 82 F.4th 217, 225 (3d Cir. 2023)
- Iseley v. Beard, 200 F. App'x 137, 142 (3d Cir. 2006)