

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
INDIANA, SOUTH BEND DIVISION

Terry Donald Rutledge, a/k/a Tori Elise Rutledge v. Centurion
Health, et al.

Rutledge · No. 3:25-CV-546-GSL-JEM · Decided April 9, 2026

SUMMARY

The court grants in part and denies in part the state defendants’ motion for summary judgment in Terry Donald Rutledge a/k/a Tori Elise Rutledge’s prisoner civil-rights action. It dismisses claims against several Indiana Department of Correction officials for failure to exhaust the Classification Appeals Process, while allowing official-capacity injunctive-relief claims against the commissioner and warden, along with claims against the remaining medical defendants, to proceed.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Gretchen S. Lund
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana, South Bend Division
DECIDED	April 9, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-CV-546-GSL-JEM
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff, a prisoner proceeding without counsel, brought claims under the Eighth Amendment against state correctional officials and medical defendants. The state defendants moved for summary judgment on the affirmative defense that Plaintiff failed to exhaust available administrative remedies before filing suit.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Summary judgment is proper when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. The court construes facts and reasonable inferences in favor of the nonmoving party. On an exhaustion defense, the defendants bear the burden of proving failure to exhaust available administrative remedies.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown

TOPICS

summary judgment

prisoners rights

civil procedure

cruel and unusual punishment

injunctions

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

prisoner civil rights

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the state defendants were entitled to summary judgment on Plaintiff's Eighth Amendment claims challenging the May 2024 transfer because Plaintiff failed to exhaust the available Classification Appeals Process.
2. Whether summary judgment was premature as to the Commissioner and warden sued in their official capacities for prospective injunctive relief concerning mental-health treatment and transfer from segregated housing.

HOLDINGS

1. The state defendants proved that an available Classification Appeals Process governed challenges to the transfer and that Plaintiff did not submit the required appeal by the deadline; therefore, summary judgment was warranted on the claims against Director Dwenger, Commissioner Reagle, Deputy Commissioner Wilson, and Director Hendrix.
2. Summary judgment was denied as to Commissioner Arnold and the warden because granting judgment on the official-capacity claims for injunctive relief would be premature while the related claims against the medical defendants remained pending.
3. The court could treat the properly supported factual assertions in the state defendants' summary-judgment motion as undisputed because Plaintiff failed to respond in accordance with Rule 56 and the applicable local rule.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“[A] suit filed by a prisoner before administrative remedies have been exhausted must be dismissed; the district court lacks discretion to resolve the claim on the merits, even if the prisoner exhausts intra-prison remedies before judgment.” (Opinion and Order, exhaustion discussion)

“Failure to exhaust is an affirmative defense that a defendant has the burden of proving.” (Opinion and Order, exhaustion discussion)

“The law takes a “strict compliance approach to exhaustion.” (Opinion and Order, exhaustion discussion)

“To exhaust remedies, “a prisoner must file complaints and appeals in the place, and at the time, the prison’s administrative rules require.” (Opinion and Order, exhaustion discussion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff was transferred to the Westville Control Unit on May 7, 2024, despite alleged mental-health problems. The facility maintained a Classification Appeals Process for challenging classification decisions, including facility transfers and housing assignments, and required a written appeal within ten business days of the decision. Plaintiff submitted no Classification Appeal concerning the transfer by the May 21, 2024 deadline. Plaintiff also pursued claims concerning allegedly inadequate mental-health care, with those claims against medical defendants remaining pending.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The state defendants moved for summary judgment and provided the required local-rule notice. Plaintiff did not respond within the applicable deadline, so the court treated the properly supported factual assertions as undisputed. The court granted summary judgment and dismissed four officials sued in their personal capacities for damages based on Plaintiff's failure to use the available Classification Appeals Process, but denied summary judgment as to the Commissioner and warden sued in their official capacities for injunctive relief because related medical-care claims remained pending.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc., 477 U.S. 242, 248 (1986)
- Heft v. Moore, 351 F.3d 278, 282 (7th Cir. 2003)
- Goodman v. Nat'l Sec. Agency, Inc., 621 F.3d 651, 654 (7th Cir. 2010)
- Perez v. Wisconsin Dep't of Corr., 182 F.3d 532, 535 (7th Cir. 1999)
- King v. McCarty, 781 F.3d 889, 893 (7th Cir. 2015)
- Lockett v. Bonson, 937 F.3d 1016, 1025 (7th Cir. 2019)