

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
OHIO

Rafael Gonzalez v. Provider Ms. Hacker, et al.

Gonzalez v. Hacker · No. 3:25-cv-01764 · Decided November 25, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio dismissed Rafael Gonzalez’s fee-paid prisoner civil-rights action under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court held that the allegations did not state a Thirteenth Amendment claim and that the alleged inadequate medical care amounted, at most, to negligence, malpractice, or a disagreement over treatment rather than deliberate indifference under the Eighth Amendment. The court also certified that an appeal could not be taken in good faith.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio
WRITING FOR THE COURT	James R. Knepp II
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio
DECIDED	November 25, 2025
DOCKET	3:25-cv-01764
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The court screened a fee-paid civil-rights complaint filed by a federal prisoner under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A and dismissed it for failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court must dismiss a prisoner civil action against a governmental entity, officer, or employee if the complaint is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant. The complaint is construed in the plaintiff's favor, and the Rule 12(b)(6) plausibility standard applies.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished

TOPICS

- prisoners rights
- cruel and unusual punishment
- civil rights
- constitutional law
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a plausible claim under the Thirteenth Amendment based on the alleged denial of medical care.
2. Whether the complaint stated a plausible Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim based on the medical treatment provided by prison medical personnel.
3. Whether the action was subject to dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A despite payment of the filing fee.

HOLDINGS

1. The complaint failed to state a plausible Thirteenth Amendment claim because it contained no allegation that Gonzalez was subjected to slavery or involuntary servitude.
2. The complaint failed to state a plausible Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim because the alleged treatment, even if inadequate or negligent, did not amount to a complete denial of care or treatment so woefully inadequate as to constitute no treatment at all.
3. A fee-paid prisoner civil-rights complaint remains subject to mandatory screening and dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A when it is frivolous or fails to state a claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Plaintiff has therefore failed to allege a plausible Eighth Amendment deliberate indifference claim concerning the medical treatment provided.”

“For the foregoing reasons, good cause appearing, it is ORDERED that Plaintiff’s action is dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Gonzalez, a federal prisoner housed under an intergovernmental agreement at Toledo Correctional Institution, alleged that prison medical personnel discontinued medications and accommodations he had received at USP Big Sandy for spinal nerve damage, shoulder injury, and other conditions. He alleged that providers substituted or limited treatment, denied or delayed specialist and diagnostic care, and failed to provide adequate treatment for his hearing impairment. The complaint nevertheless alleged repeated medical examinations, laboratory tests and x-rays, medications including Depakote, Prednisone, and Tylenol, an outside consultation, and placement on a specialist list.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Rafael Gonzalez filed a pro se complaint against prison medical providers alleging inadequate medical care in violation of the Eighth and Thirteenth Amendments. Although he paid the filing fee, the court screened the action under § 1915A and summarily dismissed it, certifying that an appeal could not be taken in good faith.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Lacoss v. Engler, 234 F.3d 1268, 1268 (6th Cir. 2000) (table)
- Benson v. O'Brian, 179 F.3d 1014, 1016 (6th Cir. 1999)
- Siller v. Dean, 205 F.3d 1341, 1341 (6th Cir. 2000) (table)
- Hill v. Lappin, 630 F.3d 468, 470-71 (6th Cir. 2010)
- Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544 (2007)
- Bibbo v. Dean Witter Reynolds, Inc., 151 F.3d 559, 561 (6th Cir. 1998)
- Sistrunk v. City of Strongsville, 99 F.3d 194, 197 (6th Cir. 1996)
- Grinter v. Knight, 532 F.3d 567, 577 (6th Cir. 2008)
- Beaudett v. City of Hampton, 775 F.2d 1274, 1277-78 (4th Cir. 1985)
- United States v. Kozminski, 487 U.S. 931, 932 (1988)
- Rhoades v. Hameed, 2009 WL 10720170, at *4 (N.D. Ohio)
- Estelle v. Gamble, 429 U.S. 97, 104-06 (1976)
- Horn ex rel. Parks v. Madison Cnty. Fiscal Ct., 22 F.3d 653, 660 (6th Cir. 1994)
- Farmer v. Brennan, 511 U.S. 825, 828-30, 834 (1994)
- Harrison v. Ash, 539 F.3d 510, 518 (6th Cir. 2008)
- Blackmore v. Kalamazoo Cnty., 390 F.3d 890, 895 (6th Cir. 2004)
- Brown v. Bargery, 207 F.3d 863, 867 (6th Cir. 2000)
- Jones v. Muskegon Cnty., 625 F.3d 935, 941 (6th Cir. 2010)
- Jennings v. Al-Dabagh, 97 F. App'x 548, 549-50 (6th Cir. 2004)
- Mitchell v. Hininger, 553 F. App'x 602, 604-05 (6th Cir. 2014)
- Dodson v. Wilkinson, 304 F. App'x 434, 440 (6th Cir. 2008)
- Alspaugh v. McConnell, 643 F.3d 162, 169 (6th Cir. 2011)
- Westlake v. Lucas, 537 F.2d 857, 860 n.5 (6th Cir. 1976)
- Santiago v. Ringle, 734 F.3d 585, 591 (6th Cir. 2013)