

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS, SPRINGFIELD DIVISION

Terrell Sims v. Steven Cambell

Sims · No. 3:26-cv-03029-SEM · Decided April 24, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois dismissed Terrell Sims's 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A for failure to state a federal claim. The court held that the complaint did not allege personal involvement by the named defendant, a constitutional right to a mental-health evaluation before investigative segregation, or a liberty interest in avoiding discretionary segregation. The court granted Sims thirty days to seek leave to file an amended complaint and found his motion for status moot.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Springfield Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sue E. Myerscough
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Central District of Illinois, Springfield Division
DECIDED	April 24, 2026
DOCKET	3:26-cv-03029-SEM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Merit review screening of a prisoner complaint filed under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, the court screens the complaint and dismisses claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant. At screening, factual allegations are accepted as true and liberally construed in the plaintiff's favor, but conclusory statements must be supported by sufficient facts to make relief plausible.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	Terrell Sims v. Steven Cambell

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

due process

pleadings

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

constitutional litigation

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a plausible § 1983 claim against the former prison warden when it alleged no personal involvement by him.
2. Whether the alleged failure to provide a mental-health evaluation before investigative segregation stated a constitutional claim.
3. Whether Sims had a constitutional liberty interest requiring notice and a hearing before placement in investigative segregation.
4. Whether the complaint satisfied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a) and the screening requirements of 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

HOLDINGS

1. A plaintiff cannot state a § 1983 claim against a defendant merely by naming the defendant in the caption or relying on the defendant's supervisory status; the complaint must allege the defendant's personal responsibility for the constitutional deprivation.
2. The alleged failure to provide a mental-health evaluation before placing an inmate in investigative segregation does not, without more, state a constitutional violation.
3. Inmates have no constitutionally protected liberty interest in avoiding discretionary segregation imposed for administrative, protective, or investigative purposes, absent circumstances that otherwise trigger a protected liberty interest.
4. A complaint that does not plausibly allege a federal constitutional violation or the defendant's personal involvement fails Rule 8(a) and must be dismissed under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1).

KEY QUOTATIONS

“A plaintiff cannot state a claim against a defendant by including the defendant’s name in the caption.”
(Analysis)

“inmates have no liberty interest in avoiding transfer to discretionary segregation—that is, segregation imposed for administrative, protective, or investigative purposes.” (Analysis)

“The Court GRANTS Plaintiff leave to file an Amended Complaint within thirty days of the entry of this order and in compliance with the Court’s guidance.” (Order paragraph 3)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sims, an inmate at Graham Correctional Center, summoned assistance for his cellmate, who died less than a minute later. Sims was then placed in investigative segregation, allegedly without a mandatory mental-health

evaluation or notice and hearing. After receiving a blood transfusion at a hospital, he returned to investigative segregation while awaiting the autopsy results concerning his cellmate.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sims filed a § 1983 complaint alleging constitutional violations arising from his placement in investigative segregation and the absence of a pre-transfer mental-health evaluation, along with a motion requesting case status. The court dismissed the complaint for failure to state a federal claim, denied the status request as moot, and granted leave to file an amended complaint within thirty days.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Turley v. Rednour, 729 F.3d 645, 649 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Alexander v. United States, 721 F.3d 418, 422 (7th Cir. 2013)
- Bravo v. Midland Credit Management, 812 F.3d 599, 601-02 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 676, 678 (2009)
- Mitchell v. Kallas, 895 F.3d 492, 498 (7th Cir. 2018)
- Collins v. Kibort, 143 F.3d 331, 334 (7th Cir. 1998)
- Gossmeier v. McDonald, 128 F.3d 481, 495 (7th Cir. 1997)
- Estate of Simpson v. Gorbett, 863 F.3d 740, 746 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Glisson v. Indiana Department of Corrections, 849 F.3d 372, 380 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Brown v. Randle, 847 F.3d 861, 865 (7th Cir. 2017)
- Townsend v. Fuchs, 522 F.3d 765, 771 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Thomas v. Ramos, 130 F.3d 754, 761 (7th Cir. 1997)
- Gentry v. Duckworth, 65 F.3d 555, 561 (7th Cir. 1995)
- George v. Smith, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007)

OPINION

Sims
PER CURIAM.
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
SPRINGFIELD DIVISION
TERRELL SIMS,)
Plaintiff,)) v.) Case No. 3:26-cv-03029-SEM)
STEVEN CAMBELL,)

Defendant.)

MERIT REVIEW ORDER

SUE E. MYERSCOUGH, United States District Judge: Before the Court is a Complaint (Doc. 1) filed under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 by Plaintiff Terrell Sims, an inmate at Graham Correctional Center (“Graham”). Plaintiff has also filed a Motion for Status (Doc. 9). The Court dismisses Plaintiff’s pleading for failure to state a claim for relief, which renders moot his status request.

I. SCREENING STANDARD

The Court must “screen” Plaintiff’s complaint and dismiss any legally insufficient claim or the entire action if warranted. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. A claim is legally insufficient if it “(1) is frivolous, malicious, or fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted; or (2) seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief.” *Id.* In reviewing the complaint, the Court accepts the factual allegations as accurate, liberally construing them in the plaintiff’s favor. *Turley v. Rednour*, 729 F.3d 645, 649 (7th Cir. 2013). However, conclusory statements and labels are insufficient. Enough facts must be provided to “state a claim for relief that is plausible on its face.” *Alexander v. United States*, 721 F.3d 418, 422 (7th Cir. 2013) (citation omitted).

II. ALLEGED FACTS

On December 8, 2024, Plaintiff called for assistance for his cellmate, who was having trouble breathing. Less than one minute later, Plaintiff’s cellmate died. Plaintiff claimed that his cellmate had earlier told Plaintiff he had six months to live. An hour later, Plaintiff was escorted to investigative segregation. Plaintiff claims that a mandatory mental health evaluation is required before being transferred to restrictive housing, which did not occur. (Pl. Compl., Doc 1 at 5-6:1-2.) Five days later, Plaintiff was transported to SSM Health Saint Mary’s Hospital in Centralia, where he received a blood transfusion. Upon his release four days later, Plaintiff returned to investigative segregation pending the results of an autopsy on his deceased cellmate, who Plaintiff asserted was terminally ill. Plaintiff asserts he must receive notice and a hearing before a transfer to restrictive housing can occur. (*Id.* at 6-7:3-4.)

III. ANALYSIS

Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a), a complaint must contain a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). “This requirement is satisfied if the complaint (1) describes the claim in sufficient detail to give the defendant fair notice of what the claim is and the grounds upon which it rests and (2) plausibly suggests that the plaintiff has a right to relief above a speculative level.” *Bravo v. Midland Credit Mgmt.*, 812 F.3d 599, 601–02 (7th Cir. 2016) (citing *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007); *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)). Additionally, “[f]or a defendant to be liable under section 1983, she must be personally responsible for the alleged deprivation of the plaintiff’s constitutional rights.” *Mitchell v. Kallas*, 895 F.3d 492, 498 (7th Cir. 2018). Despite naming Defendant Cambell, the former Graham warden, Plaintiff does not mention Cambell again in his pleading. See *Collins v. Kibort*, 143 F.3d 331, 334 (7th Cir. 1998) (“A plaintiff cannot state a

claim against a defendant by including the defendant's name in the caption."). To the extent Plaintiff names Defendant Cambell based on his supervisory responsibility, this is also inadequate to impose § 1983 liability. See *Gossmeier v. McDonald*, 128 F.3d 481, 495 (7th Cir. 1997) ("The doctrine of respondeat superior cannot be used to impose § 1983 liability on a supervisor for the conduct of a subordinate violating a plaintiff's constitutional rights."); see also *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 676 (2009) (noting that because vicarious liability is inapplicable to § 1983 suits, "a plaintiff must plead that each Government-official defendant, through the official's own individual actions, has violated the Constitution."). Plaintiff also does not have a constitutional right to a mental health evaluation before being placed in investigative segregation. See *Estate of Simpson v. Gorbett*, 863 F.3d 740, 746 (7th Cir. 2017); *Glisson v. Ind. Dep't of Corr.*, 849 F.3d 372, 380 (7th Cir. 2017) (stating that a failure to follow departmental guidelines "in itself . . . does not describe an Eighth Amendment violation"); see also *Brown v. Randle*, 847 F.3d 861, 865 (7th Cir. 2017) ("42 U.S.C. §1983 does not authorize federal courts to order state officials to pay damages for violations of state law; remedies in §1983 suits are for violations of federal law only."). Furthermore, "inmates have no liberty interest in avoiding transfer to discretionary segregation—that is, segregation imposed for administrative, protective, or investigative purposes." *Townsend v. Fuchs*, 522 F.3d 765, 771 (7th Cir. 2008) (holding that plaintiff did not have a constitutionally protected liberty interest in avoiding placement in administrative segregation pending an investigation because this type of segregation is considered "discretionary segregation," which inmates have "no liberty interest avoiding," and also because plaintiff's placement in segregation "neither was indefinite, nor affected his parole eligibility"); see also *Thomas v. Ramos*, 130 F.3d 754, 761 (7th Cir. 1997) ("Both temporary confinement and investigative status have been determined to be discretionary segregation, and do not implicate a liberty interest."). Consequently, Plaintiff's Complaint is dismissed. However, if Plaintiff believes he can revise his pleading to state a cause of action, he may file a Motion for Leave to File an Amended Complaint. If Plaintiff elects to file an amended pleading, it must be attached to his motion for leave. The Court does not accept piecemeal amendments. Plaintiff's claims must stand independently without reference to his initial filing and contain all claims against all defendants. Plaintiff must specify the constitutional violation, when it occurred, and the Defendant or Defendants personally involved. See *Gentry v. Duckworth*, 65 F.3d 555, 561 (7th Cir. 1995) ("To recover damages under § 1983, a plaintiff must establish that a defendant was personally responsible for the deprivation of a constitutional right."). The Court informs Plaintiff that any attempt to join unrelated claims and defendants is not permitted. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 20(a)(2). In other words, multiple claims against a single defendant are allowed, but "Claim A against Defendant 1 should not be joined with unrelated Claim B against Defendant 2." *George v. Smith*, 507 F.3d 605, 607 (7th Cir. 2007). Plaintiff's Motion for Status (Doc. 9) is moot with the entry of the Court's Merit Review Order. IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED: 1) Plaintiff's Motion for Status (Doc. 9) is MOOT. 2) Plaintiff's Complaint (Doc. 1) is DISMISSED for failure to state a federal claim on which relief may be

granted as required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1). 3) The Court GRANTS Plaintiff leave to file an Amended Complaint within thirty days of the entry of this order and in compliance with the Court's guidance. If Plaintiff does not submit an amendment on or before the thirty-day deadline, the Court will dismiss Plaintiff's case without prejudice. ENTERED April 24, 2026. s/ Sue E. Myerscough _____

SUE E. MYERSCOUGH

UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE