

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Goldsberry v. North Bay Regional Hospital

No. 2:25-cv-0379 CSK P (E.D. Cal. Mar. 27, 2025) · No. No. 2:25-cv-0379 CSK P · Decided March 27, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California grants William Frederick Goldsberry’s request to proceed in forma pauperis and assesses the statutory filing fee. The court dismisses his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint challenging the alleged denial of placement in a rehabilitative facility because of homelessness, finding the allegations insufficiently specific and failing to establish standing, state action, or a cognizable equal protection claim. The dismissal is without prejudice, and plaintiff is granted thirty days to file an amended complaint.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Chi Soo Kim
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	March 27, 2025
DOCKET	No. 2:25-cv-0379 CSK P
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983; the court granted plaintiff leave to proceed in forma pauperis, screened the complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A, dismissed the complaint for failure to state a sufficiently specific claim and failure to satisfy Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2), and granted leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Mandatory prisoner-complaint screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; dismissal is required for frivolous claims, claims that fail to state a claim, or claims seeking monetary relief from an immune defendant. The court also applied the Rule 8(a)(2) fair-notice pleading standard, accepting well-pleaded allegations as true and construing the complaint in plaintiff's favor.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	William Frederick Goldsberry, Jr. v. North Bay Regional Hospital

TOPICS

section 1983 prisoners rights equal protection pleadings civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure civil rights constitutional law prisoner litigation health law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a cognizable claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 by alleging a violation of a federal right committed under color of state law.
2. Whether the complaint stated a Fourteenth Amendment equal-protection claim based on plaintiff's homelessness or a class-of-one theory.
3. Whether the complaint satisfied Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2)'s requirement of a short and plain statement giving fair notice of the claim and the grounds on which it rests.
4. Whether the complaint should be dismissed with leave to amend under the court's prisoner-screening obligations.

HOLDINGS

1. A § 1983 claim requires allegations showing both a violation of a federal constitutional or statutory right and that the violation was committed by a person acting under color of state law; the complaint failed to allege facts showing that the hospital or social worker acted under color of state law or that the defendant was personally involved in a constitutional deprivation.
2. Homelessness is not a suspect or protected class under the Equal Protection Clause, and the complaint did not adequately allege a class-of-one claim because it did not identify similarly situated persons who were intentionally treated differently without a rational relationship to a legitimate state purpose.
3. The complaint failed to satisfy Rule 8(a)(2) because its allegations were too vague and conclusory to provide fair notice of the claim and the grounds on which it rested.
4. The complaint was dismissed, but plaintiff was granted thirty days to file a complete amended complaint complying with the Civil Rights Act, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and the Local Rules.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In order to survive dismissal for failure to state a claim, a complaint must contain more than “a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action;” it must contain factual allegations sufficient “to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.”” (at 3)

“To establish Article III standing, a plaintiff must allege: injury-in-fact that is (1) concrete and particularized, as well as actual and imminent; (2) fairly traceable to the challenged action of the defendant; and (3) redressable by a favorable ruling.” (at 6)

“Because being homeless does not constitute a protected class, plaintiff cannot state a cognizable discrimination claim based on being homeless.” (at 7)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that he underwent spine-pelvis-hip surgery at North Bay Regional Hospital in 2022 and was required to place no weight on his left leg for approximately nine weeks. He alleged that a hospital social worker initially assured him that he would be discharged to a rehabilitative facility, but after learning that plaintiff was homeless, told him that hospital policy prevented placement in such a facility and suggested a homeless shelter. Plaintiff claimed this constituted Fourteenth Amendment equal-protection discrimination and sought damages, but did not identify a specific resulting injury, the hospital's or social worker's state action, or similarly situated persons treated differently.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed a pro se § 1983 complaint alleging that North Bay Regional Hospital discriminated against him by refusing to discharge him to a rehabilitative facility because he was homeless. Plaintiff requested in forma pauperis status. The court granted that request, assessed the statutory filing fee and initial partial fee, screened the complaint, dismissed it with leave to amend within thirty days, and warned that failure to amend could result in dismissal of the action.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

No remand. Plaintiff was ordered to file, within thirty days, a completed Notice of Amendment and an original amended complaint bearing the assigned docket number and labeled "Amended Complaint." The amended complaint must be complete in itself and comply with the Civil Rights Act, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and the Local Rules. Failure to amend may result in dismissal of the action.

CASES CITED

- *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325, 327 (1989)
- *Franklin v. Murphy*, 745 F.2d 1221, 1227-28 (9th Cir. 1984)
- *Jackson v. Arizona*, 885 F.2d 639, 640 (9th Cir. 1989)
- *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1130-31 (9th Cir. 2000)
- *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)
- *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007)
- *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974)
- *West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- *Jones v. Williams*, 297 F.3d 930, 934 (9th Cir. 2002)
- *Hansen v. Black*, 885 F.2d 642, 646 (9th Cir. 1989)
- *Johnson v. Duffy*, 588 F.2d 740, 743-44 (9th Cir. 1978)

- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 679 (2009)
- Starr v. Baca, 652 F.3d 1202, 1208 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Clapper v. Amnesty International USA, 568 U.S. 398, 408 (2013)
- Monsanto Co. v. Geertson Seed Farms, 561 U.S. 139, 149 (2010)
- Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife, 504 U.S. 555, 561 (1992)
- Friends of the Earth, Inc. v. Laidlaw Environmental Services (TOC), Inc., 528 U.S. 167, 185 (2000)
- City of Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center, 473 U.S. 432 (1985)
- Shakur v. Schriro, 514 F.3d 878, 891 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Furnace v. Sullivan, 705 F.3d 1021, 1030 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Community Concerning Community Improvement v. City of Modesto, 583 F.3d 690, 702-03 (9th Cir. 2009)
- Serrano v. Francis, 345 F.3d 1071, 1082 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Engquist v. Oregon Department of Agriculture, 553 U.S. 591, 601-02 (2008)
- Village of Willowbrook v. Olech, 528 U.S. 562, 564 (2000)
- Lazy Y Ranch Ltd. v. Behrens, 546 F.3d 580, 592 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Jones v. Community Redevelopment Agency, 733 F.2d 646, 649 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Rizzo v. Goode, 423 U.S. 362, 371 (1976)
- May v. Enomoto, 633 F.2d 164, 167 (9th Cir. 1980)
- Ramirez v. County of San Bernardino, 806 F.3d 1002, 1008 (9th Cir. 2015)