

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Robert D. Johnson v. Ana Mondet, Scott Steadman, H. Mosely, Brian
Wilfong, Ronald Bates, Jessica Lewis, James Hill, Patrick O’Neill

Johnson v. Mondet · No. 3:25-cv-1150-DMS-BLM · Decided December 16, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of California grants Robert D. Johnson leave to proceed in forma pauperis and assesses an initial partial filing fee. The court dismisses his 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint without leave to amend because prisoners have no constitutional right to vocational or educational programs in prison.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dana M. Sabraw
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of California
DECIDED	December 16, 2025
DOCKET	3:25-cv-1150-DMS-BLM
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A pro se state prisoner brought a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 action challenging the denial of access to prison vocational and educational programs. After reopening the case upon Plaintiff's renewed in forma pauperis motion, the district court granted IFP status and screened the complaint sua sponte under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b), dismissing it without leave to amend.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court applied the Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) failure-to-state-a-claim standard in screening the prisoner complaint under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B) and 1915A(b). A complaint must contain sufficient factual matter to state a claim that is plausible on its face, and conclusory or threadbare allegations are insufficient.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; nonprecedential

TOPICS

prisoners rights

section 1983

civil rights

due process

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

federal civil procedure

constitutional law

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the prisoner's complaint stated a constitutional claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 based on denial of access to vocational and educational programs in prison.
2. Whether the complaint should be dismissed without leave to amend because the alleged deprivation could not constitute a constitutional violation.
3. Whether Plaintiff satisfied the requirements for proceeding in forma pauperis and, if so, what initial partial filing fee should be assessed.

HOLDINGS

1. A prisoner does not have a constitutional right to educational or vocational opportunities in prison; therefore, allegations that prison officials denied access to CTE or vocational classes did not state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
2. The court must screen a prisoner's complaint proceeding in forma pauperis and dismiss it to the extent it is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks damages from immune defendants.
3. Leave to amend was properly denied because amendment would be futile where the claim is based solely on denial of vocational training for which there is no constitutional right.
4. Plaintiff qualified to proceed in forma pauperis, subject to payment of the statutory filing fee through an initial partial filing fee and subsequent monthly payments.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“But regardless, prisoners do not have a constitutional right to an education.” (at 6)

“Here, however, the Court finds amendment would be futile because Plaintiff’s ground for relief is based on a denial of vocational training in prison and there is no such constitutional right.” (at 7)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Johnson, a state inmate, alleged that prison and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation officials failed to connect him with career technical education or vocational schooling between July 2022 and January 2023. Officials allegedly placed him on a nonexistent welding-course list, denied his request to transfer to a housing yard where welding was offered, and denied access to a solar-electricity certification program or an alternative. Johnson claimed that the denials prevented him from obtaining vocational certification and earning sentence-reduction credits.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The action was originally filed in the Central District of California. The court previously denied Plaintiff's IFP request and dismissed the action without prejudice, allowing reopening upon submission of a properly supported IFP motion or payment of the filing fee. After Plaintiff filed a renewed IFP motion and the case was reopened, the court granted IFP status, assessed an initial partial filing fee, screened the complaint, and dismissed it in its entirety without leave to amend.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Andrews v. Cervantes, 493 F.3d 1047, 1051 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Hymas v. U.S. Dep't of the Interior, 73 F.4th 763, 765, 767 (9th Cir. 2023)
- Andrews v. King, 398 F.3d 1113, 1119 (9th Cir. 2005)
- Bruce v. Samuels, 577 U.S. 82, 84 (2016)
- Taylor v. Delatoore, 281 F.3d 844, 847, 850 (9th Cir. 2002)
- Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc)
- Rhodes v. Robinson, 621 F.3d 1002, 1004 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Watison v. Carter, 668 F.3d 1108, 1112 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Rhodes v. Chapman, 452 U.S. 337, 348 (1981)
- Toussaint v. McCarthy, 801 F.2d 1080, 1092 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Baumann v. Arizona Dep't of Corr., 754 F.2d 841, 846 (9th Cir. 1985)
- Smith v. Lambert, 12 F. App'x 570, 571 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Wishon v. Gammon, 978 F.2d 446, 450 (8th Cir. 1992)
- Neal v. California, 2019 WL 3975456, at *2 (E.D. Cal. 2019), report and recommendation adopted, 2019 WL 5822744 (E.D. Cal. 2019)
- Hodge v. Santiesteban, 2019 WL 2386056, at *1 (E.D. Cal. 2019)
- Godoy v. Brown, 2019 WL 359418, at *2 (N.D. Cal. 2019)
- Maraglino v. Cnty. of San Diego, 2016 WL 4536741, at *6 (S.D. Cal. 2016)
- Akhtar v. Mesa, 698 F.3d 1202, 1212 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Hartmann v. California Dep't of Corr. & Rehab., 707 F.3d 1114, 1130 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Shatswell v. Taylor, 2020 WL 210629, at *2 (N.D. Cal. 2020)