

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Devi v. Stanford Health Care

Devi · No. 4:24-cv-03897-KAW · Decided June 6, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California granted Stanford Health Care’s motion to dismiss claims in Sanjeshni Devi’s first amended complaint. The court dismissed the ninth through twelfth causes of action without leave to amend, dismissed the blacklisting claim with leave to amend, and struck paragraphs 23–32 as immaterial, impertinent, and scandalous. The order permits amendment of the blacklisting claim within 14 days.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kandis A. Westmore
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	June 6, 2025
DOCKET	4:24-cv-03897-KAW
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant moved under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) to dismiss the ninth through thirteenth causes of action in the first amended complaint and moved under Rule 12(f) to strike related allegations.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true and determines whether the complaint states a facially plausible claim for relief. Dismissal is proper when there is no cognizable legal theory or insufficient factual matter. A Rule 12(f) motion to strike is committed to the district court's discretion and is generally disfavored, but may be granted for immaterial, impertinent, or scandalous matter.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; limited persuasive value
PARTIES	Sanjeshni Devi v. Stanford Health Care

TOPICS

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PRACTICE AREAS

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ninth cause of action stated a FEHA claim for failure to prevent discrimination, harassment, or retaliation when the alleged workplace conflict arose from a personal romantic relationship and was not alleged to be based on a protected characteristic.
2. Whether the tenth and twelfth causes of action stated intentional-tort claims against Stanford Health Care based on alleged employee conduct that was rooted in a personal dispute and allegedly occurred outside the scope of employment.
3. Whether the eleventh cause of action stated a negligent-infliction-of-emotional-distress claim where the complaint did not establish a duty of care after Plaintiff's termination.
4. Whether the thirteenth cause of action stated a blacklisting claim under California Labor Code section 1050 when the complaint did not clearly allege false representations, resulting harm, or communication to a prospective rather than current employer.
5. Whether paragraphs 23 through 32 should be stricken under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(f) as immaterial, impertinent, and scandalous.

HOLDINGS

1. A FEHA failure-to-prevent claim requires an underlying actionable discrimination, harassment, or retaliation claim. Alleged mistreatment arising from a personal romantic relationship, without facts showing that it was based on sex, gender, marital status, or another protected characteristic, does not establish the required underlying FEHA violation.
2. An employer is not vicariously liable for intentional torts committed by an employee when the conduct lacks a causal nexus to the employee's work and is undertaken for purely personal reasons.
3. The negligent-infliction-of-emotional-distress claim failed because Plaintiff did not establish that Stanford Health Care owed her a post-termination duty of care to prevent the alleged harassment.
4. A blacklisting claim requires allegations that, after employment ended, the defendant made an untrue representation about the plaintiff to a prospective employer, knew the representation was untrue, intended to prevent employment, and caused harm. The claim was inadequately pleaded where the complaint did not clarify the falsity of the alleged statements, resulting harm, or whether the recipient was a prospective rather than current employer.
5. Paragraphs 23 through 32 were properly stricken under Rule 12(f) because, after dismissal of the claims concerning Plaintiff's interpersonal relationship, the allegations were immaterial, impertinent, and scandalous.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“This conflict is not based on Plaintiff’s gender at all. Rather, it is based on Plaintiff’s romantic involvement with Ms. Nisha’s son.” (at 4)

“That the employment brought tortfeasor and victim together in time and place is not enough.” (at 5)

“Only misstatements made to potential employer is actionable under Labor Code § 1050.” (at 6)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Sanjeshni Devi worked for Stanford Health Care from 2019 until her termination in May 2024. She alleged that her supervisor harassed and retaliated against her after Devi's romantic relationship with the supervisor's son ended, including by assigning difficult work, delaying transfers, making disparaging statements, and threatening to get even. Devi also alleged that after her termination, someone sent information about her prior employment and workers' compensation claim to her supervisor at Kaiser Santa Rosa and that unidentified persons engaged in social-media harassment. The amended complaint asserted claims including failure to prevent FEHA violations, intentional and negligent infliction of emotional distress, distribution of private sexually explicit materials, and blacklisting.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action on June 28, 2024, and filed a first amended complaint on February 6, 2025, adding five causes of action. Stanford Health Care moved to dismiss the ninth through thirteenth causes of action and to strike paragraphs 23 through 32. The court granted the motion to dismiss, dismissing the ninth through twelfth causes of action with prejudice and the thirteenth cause of action with leave to amend, and granted the motion to strike.

DISPOSITION

other

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

No remand. Plaintiff may file a second amended complaint limited to the thirteenth cause of action within 14 days. If she does not timely amend, Defendant must answer the first amended complaint within 15 days after the amendment deadline.

CASES CITED

- Navarro v. Block, 250 F.3d 729, 732 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Erickson v. Pardus, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (per curiam)
- Shroyer v. New Cingular Wireless Servs., Inc., 622 F.3d 1035, 1041 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 677-78 (2009)
- Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 555, 557 (2007)
- Epstein v. Wash. Energy Co., 83 F.3d 1136, 1140 (9th Cir. 1996)
- Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1127 (9th Cir. 2000)

- Whittlestone, Inc. v. Handi-Craft Co., 618 F.3d 970, 973 (9th Cir. 2010)
- Barnes v. AT & T Pension Ben. Plan-Nonbargained Program, 718 F. Supp. 2d 1167, 1170 (N.D. Cal. 2010)
- Fantasy, Inc. v. Fogerty, 984 F.2d 1524, 1527 (9th Cir. 1993)
- RDF Media Ltd. v. Fox Broad. Co., 372 F. Supp. 2d 556, 561 (C.D. Cal. 2005)
- Cruz v. Bank of New York Mellon, No. 12-CV-00846-LHK, 2012 WL 2838957, at *2 (N.D. Cal. July 10, 2012)
- Trujillo v. N. Cnty. Transit Dist., 63 Cal. App. 4th 280, 288-89 (1998)
- Smith v. Fair Employment & Housing Commission, 12 Cal. 4th 1143, 1156, 1158 (1996)
- Comcast Cable Commc'ns, LLC v. OpenTV, Inc., 319 F.R.D. 269, 272 (N.D. Cal. 2017)
- Deerpoint Grp., Inc. v. Agrigenix, LLC, 345 F. Supp. 3d 1207, 1234 n.15 (E.D. Cal. 2018)
- Weiland v. Palm Beach Cnty. Sheriff's Office, 792 F.3d 1313, 1321-23 (11th Cir. 2015)
- Johnson v. Mammoth Recreations, Inc., 975 F.2d 604, 607-09 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Lisa M. v. Henry Mayo Newhall Mem'l Hosp., 12 Cal. 4th 291, 297-98 (1995)
- John R. v. Oakland Unified Sch. Dist., 48 Cal. 3d 438, 447 (1989)
- Kelly v. General Telephone Co., 136 Cal. App. 3d 278, 288-89 (1982)