

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Stephenson v. Clendenin

Case No. 2:22-cv-1521-DAD-JDP (P) (E.D. Cal. Dec. 3, 2025) · No. 2:22-cv-1521-DAD-JDP (P) · Decided
December 3, 2025

SUMMARY

This document contains findings and recommendations in a civil-rights action brought by civil detainees at Coalinga State Hospital against Department of State Hospitals officials. The magistrate judge recommends granting in part and denying in part defendants’ motion to dismiss, including dismissal of the Eighth Amendment claims, certain Fourteenth Amendment claims concerning sex-offender treatment and internet-capable devices, and dismissal with leave to amend of one First Amendment religious-services claim. Claims concerning educational programming, phone calls, personal clothing, nutritional supplements, and related conditions of confinement are recommended to proceed, while official-capacity damages claims are barred by the Eleventh Amendment.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jeremy D. Peterson
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	December 3, 2025
DOCKET	2:22-cv-1521-DAD-JDP (P)
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs brought a consolidated civil-rights action concerning conditions of confinement and moved against defendants' Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss. The magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations recommending that the motion be granted in part and denied in part.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court considers whether the complaint states a facially plausible claim for relief, generally accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true, construes them in the nonmoving party's favor, and considers the pleadings, attached exhibits, and matters subject to judicial notice. Qualified immunity may support dismissal at the pleading stage only when its applicability is apparent from the complaint itself.

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	William Stephenson, Thomas Bodnar, Joshua Forster v. Stephanie Clendenin, Brandon Brice

TOPICS

[motions to dismiss](#)
[due process](#)
[first amendment](#)
[eleventh amendment immunity](#)
[civil procedure](#)

PRACTICE AREAS

[civil rights](#)
[constitutional law](#)
[prisoner and civil-detainee rights](#)
[civil procedure](#)
[remedies](#)

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether civil detainees may pursue conditions-of-confinement claims under the Eighth Amendment rather than the Fourteenth Amendment.
2. Whether Bodnar and Forster stated a Fourteenth Amendment claim based on inadequate sex-offender treatment while awaiting SVP adjudication.
3. Whether plaintiffs stated a Fourteenth Amendment claim based on restrictions on internet-capable electronic devices.
4. Whether plaintiffs stated Fourteenth Amendment claims based on unequal access to educational programming, free telephone calls, personal clothing, nutritional supplements, and food purchases compared with criminal counterparts.
5. Whether Bodnar stated a First Amendment religious-exercise claim and should receive leave to amend.
6. Whether defendants were entitled to qualified immunity at the motion-to-dismiss stage.
7. Whether the Eleventh Amendment barred official-capacity damages claims while permitting prospective injunctive relief.

HOLDINGS

1. The Eighth Amendment does not govern civil detainees' challenges to their conditions of confinement; such claims arise under the Fourteenth Amendment. The Eighth Amendment claims should therefore be dismissed without leave to amend.
2. Bodnar and Forster failed to state a Fourteenth Amendment claim based on denial of sex-offender treatment while awaiting SVP adjudication because California law does not mandate such treatment before a person is adjudicated an SVP. The claim should be dismissed without leave to amend.
3. Plaintiffs adequately alleged that denying them access to internet-capable electronic devices was presumptively punitive because criminal counterparts and certain released individuals allegedly received more individualized access. Defendants nevertheless rebutted the presumption by identifying legitimate, nonpunitive security and facility-management interests, so the claim should be dismissed without leave to amend.

4. Plaintiffs sufficiently alleged that these restrictions were more restrictive than conditions imposed on criminal counterparts and therefore presumptively punitive. Defendants did not identify legitimate, nonpunitive interests rebutting the presumption at the pleading stage, so dismissal should be denied.
5. Bodnar failed to allege sufficient facts comparing his access to Protestant services with the access available to criminal counterparts, but the deficiency could be cured by amendment. The claim should be dismissed with leave to amend.
6. Qualified immunity should not support dismissal of the Fourteenth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claims that adequately alleged a violation of clearly established rights. The issue was premature as to Bodnar's First Amendment claim because that claim was being dismissed with leave to amend.
7. The Eleventh Amendment bars plaintiffs' claims for monetary damages against defendants in their official capacities, but does not bar their claims for prospective injunctive relief under *Ex parte Young*.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The Fourteenth Amendment, not the Eighth Amendment, governs civil detainees’ challenges against the conditions of their confinement.” (at 7)

“an individual detained under civil process . . . cannot be subjected to conditions that amount to punishment.” (at 7-8)

“they are entitled to more considerate treatment and conditions of confinement than criminals whose conditions of confinement are designed to punish.” (at 8)

“legitimate, non-punitive interests” (at 9)

“Determining claims of qualified immunity at the motion-to-dismiss stage raises special problems for legal decision making.” (at 15)

“the state official sued ‘must have some connection with the enforcement of the act’” (at 16)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs were civil detainees held at Coalinga State Hospital under California's Sexually Violent Predator Act. Bodnar and Forster were awaiting treatment or adjudication of their SVP petitions, while Stephenson had been adjudicated an SVP and was awaiting conditional release. They alleged inadequate sex-offender treatment and more restrictive access than criminal counterparts to internet-capable devices, educational and vocational programming, personal clothing, nutritional supplements, and free telephone calls; Bodnar also alleged denial of Protestant religious services while Catholic and Native American services were available.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs, civil detainees held at Coalinga State Hospital, alleged violations of the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments and, as to Bodnar, the First Amendment. Defendants moved to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). The magistrate judge recommended dismissal of the Eighth Amendment claims, the pre-adjudication treatment claim, the internet-device claim, Bodnar's religious-services claim with leave to amend,

and official-capacity damages claims, while recommending that other Fourteenth Amendment conditions-of-confinement claims proceed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 556, 570 (2007)
- Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009)
- Chubb Custom Insurance Co. v. Space Systems/Loral, Inc., 710 F.3d 946, 956 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Akhtar v. Mesa, 698 F.3d 1202, 1212 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Franklin v. Murphy, 745 F.2d 1221, 1228-29 (9th Cir. 1984)
- Jones v. Blanas, 393 F.3d 918, 923, 931-35 (9th Cir. 2004)
- King v. County of Los Angeles, 885 F.3d 548, 556-58 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Hubbart v. Superior Court, 19 Cal. 4th 1138, 1171 (1999)
- Kitchens v. Pierce, 584 F. App'x 302, 304 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Batten v. Shasta County Board of Supervisors, 489 F. App'x 174, 175 (9th Cir. 2012)
- People v. Ciancio, 134 Cal. Rptr. 2d 531, 545-46 (Cal. Ct. App. 2003)
- Batten v. Shasta County Jail, No. CIV S-08-2511 LKK EFB, 2011 WL 3875706, at *1, *11-*12 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 11, 2011)
- Fletcher v. Clendenin, No. 22-cv-00249-AWI-BAM, 2022 WL 2791480, at *5-*6 (E.D. Cal. July 15, 2022)
- Fletcher v. Clendenin, No. 22-cv-00249-AWI-BAM, 2022 WL 4226209 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 12, 2022)
- Fletcher v. Clendenin, No. 22-cv-00249-AWI-BAM, 2024 WL 5247103 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 30, 2024)
- Johanneck v. Ahlin, No. 18-cv-00051-LJO-MJS, 2018 WL 1014454 (E.D. Cal. Feb. 21, 2018)
- Keates v. Koile, 883 F.3d 1228, 1234-35 (9th Cir. 2018)
- O'Brien v. Welty, 818 F.3d 920, 936 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Tarabochia v. Adkins, 766 F.3d 1115, 1121 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Chappell v. Mandeville, 706 F.3d 1052, 1058 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Kentucky v. Graham, 473 U.S. 159, 166 (1985)
- Flint v. Dennison, 488 F.3d 816, 824-25 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Bair v. Krug, 853 F.2d 672, 675 (9th Cir. 1988)
- Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action v. Brown, 674 F.3d 1128, 1134 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Weinapple v. Bonta, No. 24-cv-1769-DAD-JDP, 2024 WL 5118224, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 16, 2024)
- Culinary Workers Union, Local 226 v. Del Papa, 200 F.3d 614, 619 (9th Cir. 1999) (per curiam)
- L.A. County Bar Ass'n v. Eu, 979 F.2d 697, 704 (9th Cir. 1992)
- United States v. Washington, 759 F.2d 1353, 1357 (9th Cir. 1985)
- Turner v. Duncan, 158 F.3d 449, 455 (9th Cir. 1998)

- Martinez v. Yist, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

Clendenin

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 WILLIAM STEPHENSON, et al., Case No. 2:22-cv-1521-DAD-JDP (P) 12 Plaintiffs,

13 v. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

14 STEPHANIE CLENDENIN, et al., 15 Defendants. 16 17 18 Plaintiffs William Stephenson, Thomas Bodnar, and Joshua Forster bring this 19 consolidated action against defendants Stephanie Clendenin, the Director of the Department of 20 State Hospitals, and Brandon Brice, the Chief of Hospital Services at the Department of State 21 Hospitals—Coalinga, alleging that defendants have violated their Eighth and Fourteenth 22 Amendment rights as civil detainees. ECF No. 64. Defendants have moved to dismiss, ECF

23 No. 66; plaintiffs have filed an opposition, ECF No. 72; and defendants have filed a reply, ECF 24 No. 73. I recommend that defendant’s motion to dismiss be granted in part and denied in part.

25 Motion to Dismiss 26 I. Legal Standards 27 A complaint may be dismissed for “failure to state a claim upon which relief may be 28 granted.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 12(b)(6). To survive a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim, a 1 plaintiff must allege “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell 2 Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). A claim has “facial plausibility when the 3 plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the 4 defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) 5 (citing Twombly, 550 U.S. at 556). The plausibility standard is not akin to a “probability 6 requirement,” but it requires more than a sheer possibility that a defendant has acted unlawfully. 7 Iqbal, 556 U.S. at 678. 8 For purposes of dismissal under Rule 12(b)(6), the court generally considers only 9 allegations contained in the pleadings, exhibits attached to the complaint, and matters properly 10 subject to judicial notice, and construes all well-pleaded material factual allegations in the light 11 most favorable to the nonmoving party. Chubb Custom Ins. Co. v. Space Sys./Loral, Inc., 710 12 F.3d 946, 956 (9th Cir. 2013); Akhtar v. Mesa, 698 F.3d 1202, 1212 (9th Cir. 2012). Dismissal 13 under Rule 12(b)(6) may be based on either: (1) lack of a cognizable legal theory, or 14 (2) insufficient facts under a cognizable legal theory. Chubb Custom Ins. Co., 710 F.3d at 956. 15 Dismissal also is appropriate if the complaint alleges a fact that necessarily defeats the claim. 16 Franklin v. Murphy, 745 F.2d 1221, 1228-29 (9th Cir. 1984). 17 II. Allegations 18 Plaintiffs are civil detainees who are currently being held in the California Department of 19 State Hospitals, Coalinga State Hospital (“Coalinga”). ECF No. 64 at 2. Forster and Bodnar are 20 alleged Sexually Violent Predators (“SVPs”) who are awaiting either treatment

or adjudication of 21 their SVP petitions under California's Sexually Violent Predator Act ("SVPA"). Id. Stephenson 22 has already been deemed an SVP who has been found eligible for and is awaiting conditional 23 release. Id. 24 Plaintiffs Bodnar and Forster first allege that their detainment at Coalinga violates the 25 Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments because Coalinga's sex offender treatment program falls 26 below the minimum required to ensure their detention does not transform into punishment. Id. at 27 11-15, 19-20. They state that the program used at Coalinga is meant to take eighteen months to 28 complete, but Coalinga's inadequate implementation of the program extends the program's length 1 to five or more years. Id. at 11. They allege that defendants have enacted policies that make 2 successful completion of the treatment program rare due to their inadequate offerings of groups 3 necessary to move to the next phase and the constant rotation of new facilitators to the groups 4 which requires group members restart the program phrase. Id. at 12-13. They also allege that 5 defendants' policies have caused them to receive inadequate treatment plans, noting that Bodnar 6 has not had a psychologist or a full team meeting for three years, the psychologist overseeing his 7 treatment had changed five times, and required group work has been difficult to complete because 8 groups are cancelled, rescheduled, or are disorganized. Id. at 13. They allege that inmates within 9 the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation ("CDCR") system are given greater 10 access to groups, personal treatment, and can be present for group work on a more frequent basis 11 than those in Coalinga. Id. at 13-14. 12 Next, all plaintiffs allege that their Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment rights are being 13 violated because they are being denied access to electronic devices with access to the internet that 14 are provided to CDCR inmates. Id. at 16, 20-21. They contend that CDCR's practice of giving 15 inmates electronic devices with access to the internet gives those inmates a better quality of life 16 when compared to plaintiffs. Id. at 16. They allege the same regarding access to industry- 17 standard vocational and Academic education classes, the ability to purchase and wear personal 18 clothing, nutritional supplements, and free outgoing telephone calls. Id. at 17-21. 19 Finally, plaintiff Bodnar alleges that defendants have denied him access to religious 20 services in violation of the First Amendment. Id. at 18, 22. He contends that he is a Christian 21 who attends Protestant Services, and that between sometime in 2018 and March 2020 he regularly 22 attended Protestant services at Coalinga. Id. at 18. However, in March 2020, Coalinga 23 suspended Protestant services, and they did not offer those services again until mid-2023, 24 although they did offer Catholic and Native American religious services during that timeframe. 25 Id. 26 Plaintiffs bring their action against defendants in their official and individual capacities.

27 Id. at 2-3. They request an injunction, compensatory and special damages, and attorneys' fees.

28 Id. at 22-23.

1 III. The Parties' Arguments 2 Defendants move to dismiss plaintiff's complaint. ECF No. 66. First, they argue that 3 plaintiffs' claims brought under the Eighth Amendment should be dismissed because plaintiffs, as 4 civil detainees, can only challenge the conditions of their

confinement under the Fourteenth 5 Amendment. ECF No. 66-1 at 10. 6 Next, defendants contend that Forster and Bodnar's Fourteenth Amendment claim 7 concerning sex offender treatment should be dismissed because they do not have a right to such 8 treatment under California law. Id. at 10-12. According to defendants, California law only 9 entitles individuals to sex offender treatment after they have been deemed SVPs after a trial. Id. 10 As such, because Forster and Bodnar have not been adjudicated as SVPs, they are not entitled to 11 treatment. Id. at 12. 12 Defendants next argue that plaintiffs' Fourteenth Amendment claim concerning access to 13 certain provisions should be dismissed. Id. at 12-15. To plaintiffs' claim regarding electronic 14 devices, defendants contend that plaintiffs do not have a constitutionally protected interest in 15 internet-capable electronic devices, and even if plaintiffs did have a protected interest, that the 16 interest is being reasonably deprived under current regulations which limit sex offender access to 17 the internet. Id. at 12-14. Defendants also argue that plaintiffs have no constitutional right to 18 vocational and academic education, to contraband, or to free phone calls. Id. at 14-15. Thus, 19 defendants argue that plaintiffs' Fourteenth Amendment claim premised on access to these items 20 should be dismissed. Id. at 12-15. 21 To Bodnar's First Amendment claim, defendants contend that Bodnar fails to state a 22 viable claim because he did not adequately describe the amount of access to religious services 23 that CDCR inmates had during the pandemic and how it was more than what he had as an SVP.

24 Id. at 15. They also argue they are entitled to qualified immunity on plaintiff's claims for 25 damages. Id. at 16. Finally, they argue that plaintiffs' claims for damages against defendants in 26 their official capacities are barred by the Eleventh Amendment. Id. at 17. In all, they ask that this 27 action be dismissed with prejudice. Id. at 17-18. 28 1 Plaintiffs oppose defendants' motion to dismiss. ECF No. 72. They contend that they 2 have properly alleged Eighth Amendment claims. Id. at 18. They also contend that they have 3 sufficiently alleged a Fourteenth Amendment claim regarding their right to treatment as pretrial 4 detainees. Id. at 18-21. They contend that under the Fourteenth Amendment, pretrial civil 5 detainees held under the SVPA cannot be subjected to conditions of confinement that are 6 substantially worse than they would face upon commitment. Id. at 19. As such, because they are 7 not being given treatment, but those who are committed are obtaining treatment, they are facing 8 substantially worse conditions of confinement than their committed counterparts. Id. at 19-20. 9 They also contend that it is irrelevant whether they are entitled to sex offender treatment under 10 California law, because they have a constitutional right to it. Id. at 20-21. 11 Next, plaintiffs contend that they have sufficiently pled their claims for more considerate 12 treatment. Id. at 21. First, they argue that defendants applied the wrong legal standard and note 13 that while they may not have individual constitutional rights to personal items and amenities, they 14 have the individual constitutional right to be free from punishment and to more considerate 15 treatment than those who have been civilly committed or criminally prosecuted. Id. at 21-23. 16 They contend that, under the proper legal standard, they have alleged that they are being denied 17 more considerate treatment. Id. at

23-24. 18 To Bodnar’s First Amendment claim, plaintiffs concede that they erroneously omitted 19 allegations that Bodnar was denied access to religious services that his criminally detained 20 counterparts received. *Id.* at 26. They request leave to amend this claim to correct this error. *Id.* 21 Finally, Plaintiffs argue that defendants are not entitled to qualified immunity and that their 22 claims are not barred by the Eleventh Amendment. *Id.* at 26-28. 23 IV. Analysis 24 A. Eighth Amendment Claims 25 The Fourteenth Amendment, not the Eighth Amendment, governs civil detainees’ 26 challenges against the conditions of their confinement. *Jones v. Blanas*, 393 F.3d 918, 931 (9th

27 Cir. 2004). As such, each of plaintiffs’ claims purportedly brought under the Eighth Amendment

28 should be dismissed, as their claims are not cognizable under that amendment. 1 B. Fourteenth Amendment 2 Under the Fourteenth Amendment’s Due Process Clause, “an individual detained under 3 civil process . . . cannot be subjected to conditions that amount to punishment.” *King v. Cnty. of Los Angeles*, 885 F.3d 548, 556-57 (9th Cir. 2018) (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting 5 *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 932). The SVPA allows involuntary commitment of an individual convicted 6 of certain enumerated sex offenses and diagnosed with a mental disorder that makes the 7 individual a “likely” recidivist. See Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 6600(a)(1), 6601(a)(1); see 8 generally *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 923. California law requires that those civil detainees “be treated, 9 not as criminals, but as sick persons.” Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 6250; accord *Hubbart v.* 10 Superior Court, 19 Cal. 4th 1138, 1171 (1999). As such, individuals civilly detained under the 11 SVPA are not held as punishment, and “they are entitled to more considerate treatment and 12 conditions of confinement than criminals whose conditions of confinement are designed to 13 punish.” *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 931 (quoting *Youngberg v. Romeo*, 457 U.S. 307, 321-22 (1982)); 14 accord *King*, 885 F.3d at 556-57. 15 In *Jones*, the Ninth Circuit created two presumptions that apply to claims brought by 16 SVPA civil detainees. See *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 934-35; see also *King*, 885 F.3d at 557. First, 17 conditions of confinement are presumed punitive if the conditions are “identical to, similar to, or 18 more restrictive than, those in which [a civil pre-trial detainee’s] criminal counterparts are held.” 19 *King*, 885 F.3d at 557 (quoting *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 934-35). Second, conditions of confinement 20 are presumed punitive if “an individual awaiting SVPA adjudication is detained under conditions 21 more restrictive than those the individual would face following SVPA commitment.” *Id.* (quoting 22 *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 933). 23 If either presumption applies, the burden shifts to the defendant to show that “legitimate, 24 non-punitive interests” justify the conditions of the detainee’s confinement and “that the 25 restrictions imposed . . . [are] not ‘excessive’ in relation to these interests.” *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 26 935. These interests could include maintaining security, effective management of the facility, and 27 ensuring detainees’ presence at trial. *King*, 885 F.3d at 558. But “generalized jail management 28 1 concerns” are insufficient to rebut the presumption. *Kitchens v. Pierce*, 584 F. App’x 302, 304 2 (9th Cir. 2014). 3 1. Bodnar and Forster’s Challenge to Treatment 4 Defendants’ motion to dismiss plaintiffs’ claim

that they are being denied adequate treatment in comparison to their already-adjudicated SVP counterparts and their criminally convicted counterparts should be granted. As noted above, defendants argue that plaintiffs do not have a legal right to obtain sex offender treatment because they are pre-trial civil detainees who have yet to be adjudicated as SVPs. See ECF No. 66-1 at 10-12. Defendants rely on *Batten v. Shasta County Board of Supervisors*, 489 F. App'x 174, 175 (9th Cir. 2012), to support their argument. In *Batten*, the Ninth Circuit affirmed the district court's order granting summary judgment in favor of defendants because plaintiff, a pre-trial detainee awaiting civil commitment proceedings under the SVPA, had no right to sex offender treatment under California law. *Id.* (citing *People v. Ciancio*, 134 Cal. Rptr. 2d 531, 545-46 (Cal. Ct. App. 2003) (holding that the SVPA does not mandate sex offender treatment before the person has been adjudicated as an SVP)). For context, the *Batten* plaintiff had been confined within Coalinga as an SVP under the SVPA. *Batten v. Shasta Cnty. Jail*, No. CIV S-08-2511 LKK EFB, 2011 WL 3875706, at *18 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 11, 2011). Before he had been adjudicated as an SVP, he was held at the Shasta County Jail to await commitment proceedings. *Id.* He brought suit based on the conditions he was subjected to while at the Shasta County Jail, including the fact that he was not provided sex offender treatment that he believed he was owed under the SVPA. *Id.* at *1, 11. The district court concluded that, because plaintiff was not entitled to sex offender treatment under the SVPA since he had not yet been adjudicated as an SVP, plaintiff could not establish a violation of his substantive due process rights. *Id.* at *12. The Ninth Circuit affirmed on appeal. *Batten*, 489 F. App'x at 175. Plaintiffs attempt to distinguish their case from *Batten*, relying on *Fletcher v. Clendenin*, No. 22-cv-00249-AWI-BAM, 2022 WL 2791480 (E.D. Cal. July 15, 2022). In *Fletcher*, the magistrate judge allowed a pro se civil detainee's complaint to move forward on his Fourteenth Amendment due process claim following screening. *Id.* at *6. The screening order does not address whether plaintiff had been adjudicated as an SVP or was awaiting such adjudication. See generally *id.* Nevertheless, the judge recommended that plaintiff be allowed to bring his Fourteenth Amendment challenge to Coalinga's failure to provide him adequate sex offender treatment under *Jones*. *Id.* at *5. The district court adopted this recommendation, see *Fletcher v. Clendenin*, No. 22-cv-00249-AWI-BAM, 2022 WL 4226209 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 12, 2022), but the action was ultimately dismissed for failure to prosecute, see *Fletcher v. Clendenin*, No. 22-cv-800249-AWI-BAM, 2024 WL 5247103 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 30, 2024). Defendants' arguments are more persuasive. Although *Jones* does hold that civil detainees are entitled to more considerate conditions of confinement and cannot be punished, see *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 931-32, plaintiffs ignore the fact that they are not entitled to sex offender treatment under state law because they have not been adjudicated as SVPs. See *Batten*, 489 F. App'x at 175; see also *Ciancio*, 134 Cal. Rptr. 2d at 545-46. Plaintiffs' reliance on *Fletcher* is misplaced, since *Fletcher* does not address whether that plaintiff was an already adjudicated SVP and *Fletcher* was in a wholly different procedural posture. In an unpublished case, the Court of Appeals has considered this issue and

ruled that 17 alleged SVPs have no right to mandated sex offender treatment while awaiting commitment 18 proceedings. See *Batten*, 489 F. App'x at 175. To rule otherwise would run afoul of the statutory 19 language, which does not mandate that pre-adjudicated SVPs receive specific sex offender 20 treatment. See *Ciancio*, 134 Cal. Rptr. 2d at 545-46. Thus, Bondar and Forster's argument that 21 they are not being provided adequate sex offender treatment as they await SVP adjudication 22 violates their due process rights should be dismissed without leave to amend. 23

2. Plaintiffs' Challenges to Access Electronic Devices with Internet

24 Access, Educational Programming, Free Phone Calls, and Other Provisions. 25 26 Defendants' motion to dismiss plaintiffs' claims related to access to electronic devices 27 with internet capabilities should be granted, but defendants' motion to dismiss plaintiffs' claims 28 related to educational programming, phone calls, and other provisions should be denied. First, as 1 to electronic devices with internet access, plaintiffs have demonstrated that they are being 2 subjected to conditions that are "more restrictive than, those in which [a civil pre-trial detainee's] 3 criminal counterparts are held." See *King*, 885 F.3d at 557 (quoting *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 934-35). 4 According to plaintiffs, their criminal counterparts are allowed access to electronic devices with 5 internet capabilities which is restricted on an individual basis. See ECF No. 64 at 16. They also 6 allege that individuals previously detained under the SVPA who are now on community or 7 conditional release have individualized conditions that allow them internet capable devices, and 8 that criminal parolees are given the same individualized conditions, but plaintiffs are not afforded 9 that same individualized treatment. See *id.* Accordingly, plaintiffs have demonstrated that their 10 access to electronic devices with internet capabilities is presumptively punitive under *Jones*. See 11 *King*, 885 F.3d at 557 (quoting *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 934-35). 12 However, defendants have rebutted this presumption by pointing to "legitimate, non- 13 punitive interests" that justify the conditions, which are "not 'excessive' in relation to these 14 interests," see *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 935, namely, regulations prohibiting plaintiffs from having 15 access to these devices. The Department of State Hospitals ("DSH") is responsible for operating 16 the facilities like Coalinga and providing treatment. Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code §§ 6600.05 (a), (b); 17 see also Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 4100(b) (providing that DSH has jurisdiction over Coalinga). 18 The DSH has authority to adopt and enforce rules and regulations that are necessary to carryout 19 its duties, and all DSH institutions are governed by uniform rules and regulations. Cal. Welf. & 20 Inst. Code §§ 4005.1, 4027, 4101. 21 Under Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations, DSH has adopted rights and related 22 procedures for all individuals (excluding those committed under the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act) 23 placed in or committed to state hospitals like Coalinga. See Cal. Code Regs. tit. 9, §§ 880-892. 24 Under these regulations, individuals being held under the SVPA "shall not have access to the 25 internet." See *id.* § 891. Another regulation, which applies to Coalinga, prohibits all DSH 26 patients access to almost all electronic devices that can connect to the internet, including tablets. 27 See *id.* § 4350(a)(1)(A). However, SVPA detainees may have access to "[t]ablets or other 28 devices designed for confined individuals through authorized vendors of the

[DHS] and [CDCR] 1 that do not contain personally accessible data storage.” Id. § 4350(b)(3). Nevertheless, the 2 regulations also allow individual hospitals to enforce “a more restrictive contraband list as 3 appropriate to address the needs or safety of a patient population or the hospital,” and also allow 4 hospitals the discretion to permit items to be accessible to patients on a supervised basis. Id. 5 § 4350(c), (d). 6 Defendants contend these regulations were put in place due to technological advances that 7 make child sexual abuse materials easier to access, and that could permit users to find new or 8 former child sexual abuse victims to victimize. ECF No. 66-1 at 13. They note that, in 9 *Johanneck v. Ahlin*, No. 18-cv-00051-LJO-MJS, 2018 WL 1014454 (E.D. Cal. Feb. 21, 2018), 10 the argument plaintiffs make in the current case has already been rejected based on the validity of 11 these regulations. 12 Here, defendants have adequately rebutted the Jones presumptions by pointing to 13 legitimate reasons why plaintiffs are denied access to electronic devices that have internet access, 14 and why these restrictions are not excessive. See *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 935. Restricting sexual 15 offenders’ abilities to access the internet maintains security and leads to the effective management 16 of the facility, which are legitimate non-punitive interests justifying the restriction. See *King*, 885 17 F.3d at 558. As such, plaintiffs’ challenge to their access to electronic devices with internet 18 capabilities should be dismissed without leave to amend. 19 Conversely, defendants’ motion to dismiss plaintiff’s Fourteenth Amendment claims 20 based on a lack of access to free phone calls, educational programming, personal clothing items, 21 and the ability to shop for food items should be denied. Defendants’ arguments on these points 22 are simply that plaintiffs do not have a constitutional right to these items, meaning they have no 23 protected liberty interest in them. See ECF No. 14-15. However, defendants do not address how 24 or why plaintiffs—who are civil detainees and afforded more rights and privileges than their 25 criminal counterparts—are not able to have access to these amenities. As plaintiffs’ complaint 26 currently stands, they sufficiently allege that they are being subjected to presumptively punitive 27 conditions of confinement because their conditions are “more restrictive than, those in which [a 28 civil pre-trial detainee’s] criminal counterparts are held.” See *King*, 885 F.3d at 557 (quoting 1 *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 934-35). Defendants make no arguments point to “legitimate, non-punitive 2 interests” that would justify the conditions of plaintiffs’ confinement and “that the restrictions 3 imposed . . . [are] not ‘excessive’ in relation to these interests.” *Jones*, 393 F.3d at 935. Thus, 4 because defendants have not rebutted the Jones presumption on these issues, their motion to 5 dismiss these claims should be denied. 6 C. Bodnar’s First Amendment Claim 7 Defendants’ motion to dismiss Bodnar’s First Amendment claim should be granted, but 8 Bodnar should be allowed leave to amend. Defendants merely argue that Bodnar failed to allege 9 the amount of access to religious services that inmates had during the pandemic and how it was 10 more than what he had as an SVP. See ECF No. 15-16. Bodnar acknowledges his First 11 Amendment claim inadvertently left out sufficient facts and contends that he can allege sufficient 12 information to withstand a motion to dismiss should he be given leave to amend. See ECF No. 72 13 at 26. Defendants’ contentions are correct, but leave to

amend should be granted on this claim 14 because Bodnar could sufficiently bring such claim if given another opportunity to supply 15 sufficient allegations. Thus, plaintiff's First Amendment claim should be dismissed with leave to 16 amend. 17 D. Qualified Immunity 18 "Determining claims of qualified immunity at the motion-to-dismiss stage raises special 19 problems for legal decision making." *Keates v. Koile*, 883 F.3d 1228, 1234 (9th Cir. 2018). 20 When qualified immunity is asserted in a motion to dismiss under Rule 12(b)(6), dismissal is not 21 appropriate unless the court can determine, based on the complaint itself, that qualified immunity 22 applies." *O'Brien v. Welty*, 818 F.3d 920, 936 (9th Cir. 2016) (emphasis added) (internal 23 quotations and citations omitted). If the operative complaint has even one allegation of a harmful 24 act that would qualify as a violation of a clearly established constitutional right, a plaintiff has the 25 right to move forward with his claims. *Keates*, 883 F.3d at 1235. There are two prongs in the 26 qualified-immunity inquiry: "(1) whether 'the facts alleged show the official's conduct violated a 27 constitutional right; and (2) if so, whether the right was clearly established' as of the date of the 28 involved events 'in light of the specific context of the case.'" *Tarabochia v. Adkins*, 766 F.3d 1115, 1121 (9th Cir. 2014) (internal quotation omitted). The court must view the facts "in the 2 light most favorable to the injured party." *Chappell v. Mandeville*, 706 F.3d 1052, 1058 (9th Cir. 3 2013) (citation omitted). 4 Here, as to plaintiffs' Fourteenth Amendment claim based on a lack of access to sex 5 offender treatment, no constitutional violation has occurred, meaning qualified immunity does not 6 apply. See *Tarabochia*, 766 F.3d at 1121. As to plaintiffs' Fourteenth Amendment claim based 7 on a lack of educational programming, phone calls, and other provisions, the complaint 8 sufficiently alleges at least one allegation of a harmful act that would qualify as a violation of a 9 clearly established constitutional right, i.e., being a civil detainee subject to more favorable 10 conditions of confinement than their criminal counterparts. As such, defendants' request for 11 qualified immunity on this issue should be denied. As to plaintiff Bodnar's First Amendment 12 claim, because the claim is being dismissed with leave to amend, it is premature to conduct a 13 qualified immunity analysis. 14 E. Eleventh Amendment 15 The Eleventh Amendment bars claims for damages against state officers sued in their 16 official capacities. See *Kentucky v. Graham*, 473 U.S. 159, 166 (1985); *Flint v. Dennison*, 488 17 F.3d 816, 824-25 (9th Cir. 2007); *Bair v. Krug*, 853 F.2d 672, 675 (9th Cir. 1988). However, the 18 doctrine set forth in *Ex Parte Young*, 209 U.S. 123 (1908), provides for a narrow exception for 19 prospective injunctive or declaratory relief against state officers in their official capacities for 20 alleged violations of federal law. *Coal. to Defend Affirmative Action v. Brown*, 674 F.3d 1128, 21 1134 (9th Cir. 2012); see also *Weinapple v. Bonta*, No. 24-cv-1769-DAD-JDP, 2024 WL 22 5118224, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Dec. 16, 2024) (applying the *Ex Parte Young* doctrine to a claim for 23 declaratory relief). 24 Under *Ex Parte Young*, "the state official sued 'must have some connection with the 25 enforcement of the act' to avoid making that official a mere representative of the state." *Culinary 26 Workers Union, Local 226 v. Del Papa*, 200 F.3d 614, 619 (9th Cir. 1999) (per curiam) (quoting 27 *Ex Parte Young*, 209 U.S. at 157). This connection "must be fairly direct; a

generalized duty to enforce state law or a general supervisory power over those persons responsible for enforcing the challenged provision will not subject an official to suit.” L.A. Cnty. Bar Ass’n v. Eu, 979 F.2d 697, 704 (9th Cir. 1992). Additionally, the relief sought needs to be directly stated, as “[p]recise resolution, not general admonition, is the function of declaratory relief.” United States v. Washington, 759 F.2d 1353, 1357 (1985). Defendants’ motion to dismiss plaintiffs’ official capacity claims for monetary damages should be granted to the extent plaintiff seeks such relief because the Eleventh Amendment bars such claims. See Kentucky v. Graham, 473 U.S. 159, 166 (1985); Flint v. Dennison, 488 F.3d 816, 824-25 (9th Cir. 2007); Bair v. Krug, 853 F.2d 672, 675 (9th Cir. 1988). Nevertheless, plaintiffs’ claims against defendants in their official capacities for injunctive relief may proceed as the relief requested is precise and direct. L.A. Cnty. Bar Ass’n v. Eu, 979 F.2d 697, 704; Washington, 759 F.2d 1353, 1357. Accordingly, it is RECOMMENDED that:

1. Defendant’s motion to dismiss, ECF No. 66, be GRANTED in part and DENIED in part.
2. Plaintiffs’ Eighth Amendment claims against defendants should be DISMISSED without leave to amend.
3. Plaintiffs Bodnar and Forster’s Fourteenth Amendment claim alleging violations of due process due to a lack of sex offender treatment should be DISMISSED without leave to amend.
4. Plaintiff’s Fourteenth Amendment claim based on a lack of access to electronic devices with access to the internet should be DISMISSED without leave to amend.
5. Defendants’ motion to dismiss plaintiffs’ Fourteenth Amendment claims alleging violations of due process due to a lack or difference in conditions of confinement, including a lack of access to educational programs, free phone calls, personal clothing, and nutritional supplements, as compared to their criminal counterparts should be DENIED.
6. Plaintiff Bodnar’s First Amendment freedom of religion claim against defendants should be DISMISSED with leave to amend.
7. Plaintiffs’ claims against defendants in their official capacities for monetary damages should be DISMISSED.

These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District Judge assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within fourteen days of service of these findings and recommendations, any party may file written objections with the court and serve a copy on all parties. Any such document should be captioned “Objections to Magistrate Judge’s Findings and Recommendations,” and any response shall be served and filed within fourteen days of service of the objections. The parties are advised that failure to file objections within the specified time may waive the right to appeal the District Court’s order. See Turner v. Duncan, 158 F.3d 449, 455 (9th Cir. 1998); Martinez v. Yist, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 11 1991).

IT IS SO ORDERED. (4 ie — Dated: _ December 3, 2025 q———_

15 JEREMY D. PETERSON

16 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

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