

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE, NASHVILLE DIVISION

Mitchell Freeman # 520969 v. Rudd Medical Center, et al.

No. 3:25-cv-00129 (M.D. Tenn. Dec. 3, 2025) · No. 3:25-cv-00129 · Decided December 3, 2025

SUMMARY

The court grants the incarcerated plaintiff’s application to proceed in forma pauperis but denies his motion to appoint counsel because it was unsigned and exceptional circumstances were not shown. On PLRA screening, the court concludes that the Rutherford County Detention Center is not a suable person under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, that the official-capacity claims against the unidentified doctor do not allege a policy or custom attributable to Rudd Medical, and that the medical-treatment allegations do not establish deliberate indifference. The action is dismissed for failure to state a claim, and the plaintiff is denied in forma pauperis status for any appeal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, Nashville Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	William L. Campbell, Jr.
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, Nashville Division
DECIDED	December 3, 2025
DOCKET	3:25-cv-00129
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A prisoner filed a pro se civil-rights complaint under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, an application to proceed in forma pauperis, and a motion to appoint counsel. The district court granted in forma pauperis status, denied the motion to appoint counsel, screened the complaint under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, and dismissed the action for failure to state a claim.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court conducted initial screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2) and 1915A, liberally construing the pro se complaint, accepting factual allegations as true unless entirely incredible, and dismissing claims that were frivolous, failed to state a claim, or sought relief from an immune defendant.

PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Mitchell Freeman # 520969 v. Rudd Medical Center, Rutherford County Detention Center, Unidentified doctor

TOPICS

section 1983 prisoners rights civil rights cruel and unusual punishment civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights prisoner litigation constitutional law civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Freeman's application to proceed in forma pauperis should be granted and whether he remained responsible for the full filing fee.
2. Whether Freeman's unsigned motion to appoint counsel should be considered or granted.
3. Whether the Rutherford County Detention Center is a suable person under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.
4. Whether the official-capacity claim against the unidentified Rudd Medical doctor adequately alleged that a Rudd Medical policy or custom caused a constitutional violation.
5. Whether the allegations of receiving ibuprofen and disagreeing with the adequacy of treatment stated an Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim.

HOLDINGS

1. The court granted Freeman's application to proceed in forma pauperis but assessed the full \$350 civil filing fee, payable through the statutory initial-payment and installment procedures.
2. The court denied Freeman's motion to appoint counsel because it was unsigned and, independently, because he did not demonstrate exceptional circumstances warranting appointment of counsel in a civil case.
3. The Rutherford County Detention Center is not a person subject to suit under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 because it is a building rather than a suable legal entity.
4. The official-capacity claim against the unidentified Rudd Medical doctor failed because Freeman did not allege that a Rudd Medical policy, practice, or custom caused the asserted constitutional deprivation.
5. Freeman's allegations did not state a colorable Eighth Amendment deliberate-indifference claim because he received medical attention, disagreed with the adequacy of the treatment, and did not allege facts showing that an individual subjectively disregarded a substantial risk of serious harm.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“To state a claim under Section 1983, a plaintiff must allege and show two elements: (1) that he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States; and (2) that the deprivation was caused by a person acting under color of state law.” (III.C. Analysis)

“A plaintiff satisfies the subjective component “by alleging facts which, if true, would show that the official being sued subjectively perceived facts from which to infer substantial risk to the prisoner, that he did in fact draw the inference, and that he then disregarded that risk.”” (III.C. Analysis)

“When a prison doctor provides treatment, albeit carelessly or inefficaciously, to a prisoner, he has not displayed a deliberate indifference to the prisoner’s needs, but merely a degree of incompetence which does not rise to the level of a constitutional violation.” (III.C. Analysis)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On May 11, 2025, Freeman slipped and fell while in custody at the Rutherford County Detention Center; he alleged that no wet-floor warning sign was present. He received ibuprofen from the medical department that day but believed it was inadequate for his back pain and alleged that he did not receive additional medical treatment during the following eight months. He sued the detention center and an unidentified doctor employed by Rudd Medical Center in the doctor's official capacity.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Freeman, an inmate at the South Central Correctional Center, filed a complaint alleging that he slipped and fell while detained, received inadequate medical treatment, and was not provided additional treatment. He sought medical treatment for prisoners who need it. The court granted his application to proceed in forma pauperis, denied his unsigned motion to appoint counsel, conducted mandatory PLRA screening, dismissed all claims, and declined to certify that an appeal would be taken in good faith.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- *Lassiter v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 452 U.S. 18, 25 (1981)
- *Willett v. Wells*, 469 F. Supp. 748, 751 (E.D. Tenn. 1977), *aff'd*, 595 F.2d 1227 (6th Cir. 1979)
- *Williamson v. Autorama, Inc.*, No. 91-5759, 947 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1991)
- *Lavado v. Keohane*, 992 F.2d 601, 604-05 (6th Cir. 1993)
- *United States v. Smotherman*, 838 F.3d 736, 739 (6th Cir. 2016)
- *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007)
- *Thomas v. Eby*, 481 F.3d 434, 437 (6th Cir. 2007)
- *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 33 (1992)
- *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520-21 (1972)
- *Jourdan v. Jabe*, 951 F.2d 108, 110 (6th Cir. 1991)
- *McDonald v. Hall*, 610 F.2d 16, 19 (1st Cir. 1979)
- *Dominguez v. Corr. Med. Servs.*, 555 F.3d 543, 549 (6th Cir. 2009)
- *Sigley v. City of Panama Heights*, 437 F.3d 527, 533 (6th Cir. 2006)

- *Plemons v. CoreCivic Admin. Headquarters*, No. 3:18-cv-00498, 2018 WL 4094816, at *3 (M.D. Tenn. Aug. 28, 2018)
- *McIntosh v. Camp Brighton*, No. 14-CV-11327, 2014 WL 1584173, at *2 (E.D. Mich. Apr. 21, 2014)
- *Fuller v. Cocran*, No. 1:05-CV-76, 2005 WL 1802415, at *3 (E.D. Tenn. July 27, 2005)
- *Pusey v. City of Youngstown*, 11 F.3d 652, 657 (6th Cir. 1993)
- *Rose v. Rutherford Cnty. Sheriff's Office*, No. 3:22-cv-00046, 2022 WL 323977, at *3 (M.D. Tenn. Feb. 2, 2022)
- *Street v. Corr. Corp. of Am.*, 102 F.3d 810, 814, 818 (6th Cir. 1996)
- *Monell v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 436 U.S. 658, 691 (1978)
- *O'Brien v. Mich. Dep't of Corr.*, 592 F. App'x 338, 341 (6th Cir. 2014)
- *Mason v. Doe*, No. 3:12CV-P794-H, 2013 WL 4500107, at *1 (W.D. Ky. Aug. 21, 2013)
- *City of Canton v. Harris*, 489 U.S. 378, 388 (1989)
- *Garner v. Memphis Police Dep't*, 8 F.3d 358, 353-64 (6th Cir. 1993)
- *Grubbs v. Bradley*, 552 F. Supp. 1052, 1119-24 (M.D. Tenn. 1982)
- *Bellamy v. Bradley*, 729 F.2d 416, 419 (6th Cir. 1984)
- *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 104-07 (1976)
- *Brooks v. Celeste*, 39 F.3d 125, 127 (6th Cir. 1994)
- *Rouster v. Cnty. of Saginaw*, 749 F.3d 437, 446 (6th Cir. 2014)
- *Comstock v. McCrary*, 273 F.3d 693, 703 (6th Cir. 2001)
- *Westlake v. Lucas*, 537 F.2d 857, 860 n.5 (6th Cir. 1976)