

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Goodwin v. Butte County

Goodwin · No. 2:25-cv-0320 CKD P · Decided February 26, 2025

SUMMARY

The court grants Michelle Renee Goodwin leave to proceed in forma pauperis and screens her prisoner civil-rights complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. It finds that she states a Fourteenth Amendment medical-care claim against Pamela Johansen, but that the remaining claims and defendants are inadequately pleaded. The court gives Goodwin 30 days to elect whether to proceed on that claim or file an amended complaint and denies her motion to compel discovery because discovery has not opened.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Carolyn K. Delaney
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	February 26, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-0320 CKD P
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 was screened under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. The court granted in forma pauperis status, found that the complaint stated a Fourteenth Amendment denial-of-medical-care claim against Pamela Johansen, found the remaining claims deficient, and denied an early motion to compel discovery.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Mandatory screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; the complaint must be dismissed in whole or in part if it is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished
PARTIES	Michelle Renee Goodwin v. Butte County, Pamela Johansen, Other named defendants

TOPICS

discovery dispute

prisoners rights

section 1983

due process

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil rights

prisoner litigation

federal civil procedure

constitutional law

torts

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint stated a cognizable § 1983 claim for denial of medical care against Pamela Johansen.
2. Whether the complaint stated claims against the other named defendants, including Butte County and the Butte County Sheriff.
3. Whether Goodwin could proceed on state-law claims without pleading compliance with the California Tort Claims Act.
4. Whether the court should compel discovery before service of process and the opening of discovery.
5. Whether Goodwin qualified to proceed in forma pauperis.

HOLDINGS

1. Goodwin qualified to proceed in forma pauperis because her declaration made the showing required by 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a).
2. The complaint stated a claim upon which relief may proceed against Pamela Johansen for denial of medical care in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.
3. The complaint failed to state claims against the other defendants and claims identified by the court unless Goodwin amended the pleading to allege specific facts linking each defendant to the claimed deprivation.
4. Butte County could not be held vicariously liable under § 1983 for the actions of its employees; municipal liability requires that a county policy or custom inflict the alleged injury.
5. To proceed on state-law claims, Goodwin had to comply with the California Tort Claims Act and plead facts demonstrating that compliance in any amended complaint.
6. The motion to compel discovery was denied because discovery was not yet open; discovery would be set after the appropriate defendants were served.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“There can be no liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 unless there is some affirmative link or connection between a defendant’s actions and the claimed deprivation.” (at 1)

“Instead, it is when execution of a government’s policy or custom, whether made by its lawmakers or by those whose edicts or acts may fairly be said to represent official policy, inflicts the injury that the government as an entity is responsible under § 1983.” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Michelle Renee Goodwin is a Butte County Jail prisoner proceeding pro se and seeking relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The court determined that her complaint stated a claim against Pamela Johansen for denial of medical care in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, but that the allegations against the other defendants and claims were insufficient. Goodwin also sought to compel discovery before the appropriate defendants had been served.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Goodwin, a Butte County Jail prisoner proceeding pro se, filed a § 1983 complaint, an application to proceed in forma pauperis, and a motion to compel discovery. The magistrate judge granted in forma pauperis status, screened the complaint, authorized Goodwin either to proceed against Johansen on the medical-care claim or amend the complaint, and denied the motion to compel because discovery had not yet opened.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Rizzo v. Goode, 423 U.S. 362 (1976)
- Ivey v. Board of Regents, 673 F.2d 266, 268 (9th Cir. 1982)
- Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658, 691, 694 (1978)
- Mangold v. California Public Utilities Commission, 67 F.3d 1470, 1477 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Shirk v. Vista Unified School District, 42 Cal. 4th 201, 209 (2007)