

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Tiffany Harrison Shabazz, et al. v. Mercy San Juan Medical Center,
et al.

Shabazz v. Mercy San Juan Medical Center · No. 2:25-cv-02810-DJC-SCR · Decided October 14, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California denied Plaintiff Tiffany Harrison Shabazz’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis without prejudice. The court found that the financial information provided was insufficient to establish eligibility, permitted Plaintiff to renew the application or pay the filing fee within 21 days, and cautioned that failure to do so could lead to a recommendation of dismissal.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Sean C. Riordan
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	October 14, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-02810-DJC-SCR
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	A pro se plaintiff moved to proceed in forma pauperis in a civil-rights action. The magistrate judge denied the motion without prejudice and allowed the plaintiff 21 days either to file a renewed application or pay the filing fee.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court evaluated whether the application sufficiently demonstrated inability to pay the filing fee under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order

TOPICS

- civil procedure
- guardianship procedure
- guardianships

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- in forma pauperis proceedings
- pro se litigation
- minor representation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff's financial application sufficiently demonstrated poverty and inability to pay the filing fee to qualify for in forma pauperis status under 28 U.S.C. § 1915.
2. Whether a pro se parent may bring an action on behalf of minor children without retaining counsel.

HOLDINGS

1. An applicant for in forma pauperis status must allege poverty with particularity, definiteness, and certainty, and expenses that are not necessities of life may undermine a claim of inability to pay. Plaintiff's application did not make a sufficient showing, so the motion was denied without prejudice.
2. A pro se parent or guardian cannot bring an action on behalf of minor children without retaining a lawyer.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“a plaintiff seeking IFP status must allege poverty with some particularity, definiteness and certainty.” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff reported monthly income of \$4,500, consisting of \$2,700 in employment income and \$1,800 in death benefits, and stated that she supported three minor children. Although the listed individual expenses totaled \$7,133, the application included \$3,000 for recreation and entertainment, which the court viewed as inconsistent with a finding that Plaintiff could not pay the filing fee. The form also indicated that Plaintiff had paid \$3,000 in cheer expenses in February 2025, creating uncertainty about whether the \$3,000 amount was actually a monthly expense.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed the action and submitted an application to proceed in forma pauperis. The matter was referred to Magistrate Judge Sean C. Riordan under Local Rule 302(c)(21) and 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). The court found the financial showing insufficient, denied the motion without prejudice, and provided an opportunity to supplement the application or pay the filing fee.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Escobedo v. Applebees, 787 F.3d 1226, 1234 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Johns v. County of San Diego, 114 F.3d 874, 877 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Kamau v. Ertifai, 2025 WL 2373718, at *2 (D. Ariz. Aug. 14, 2025)
- Valentine v. Granville Realty, Inc., 2025 WL 1839935, at *2 (E.D. Cal. July 3, 2025)

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