

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MAINE

Justin R. Boucher v. Kennebec County Jail et al.

Boucher · No. 1:25-cv-184-LEW · Decided March 25, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Maine partially adopts and partially rejects a magistrate judge’s recommended decision concerning Justin R. Boucher’s civil rights complaint. The court allows claims to proceed against Officer Puzzuto for excessive force and against “Dr. Sam” under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 for alleged deliberate indifference to a serious medical need, while dismissing other claims without prejudice and denying joinder of proposed claims involving other correctional institutions. The court also denies appointment of counsel and directs service on the remaining defendants.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maine
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Lance E. Walker
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maine
DECIDED	March 25, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-184-LEW
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court conducted de novo review of a magistrate judge's recommended decision on screening Plaintiff's civil-rights complaint and ruled on Plaintiff's objection, which the court construed in part as a supplemental pleading.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of matters adjudicated by the magistrate judge's recommended decision; cursory screening review for whether the pleadings state a claim.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order

TOPICS

- section 1983
- civil rights
- joinder
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the original complaint stated claims other than the excessive-force claim against Officer Puzzuto.
2. Whether Plaintiff's supplemental allegations against Dr. Sam sufficiently alleged deliberate indifference to a serious medical need under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 at the screening stage.
3. Whether proposed claims involving personnel and events at other correctional institutions could be added in this action under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 20.
4. Whether Plaintiff was entitled to appointment of counsel at that stage of the proceedings.

HOLDINGS

1. The original complaint failed to state a claim against the other defendants, but the excessive-force claim against Officer Puzzuto could proceed.
2. Construing Plaintiff's objection as a supplemental pleading, the court held that the allegations against Dr. Sam contained the minimum allegations needed to state a § 1983 claim for deliberate indifference to a serious medical need at the screening stage.
3. The court denied Plaintiff's request to add defendants and claims concerning the Maine Correctional Center and Maine State Prison because there was no evident basis for joining those matters with the claims against Officer Puzzuto and Dr. Sam.
4. The request for appointment of counsel was denied without prejudice to renewal at a later stage.
5. The case would proceed against Dr. Sam exclusively under § 1983 and not under Maine malpractice law.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"I have made a de novo determination of all matters adjudicated by the Recommended Decision." (2)

"construing Plaintiff's Objection as a supplemental pleading, I conclude summarily in the screening context that the pleadings now appear to contain the minimum allegations needed to state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against 'Dr. Sam,'" (2)

"I have not independently screened the allegations and provide no prediction whether Plaintiff has stated viable claims against those other proposed defendants." (2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, formerly detained at the Kennebec County Jail, alleged that Officer Puzzuto used excessive force. He also alleged that a jail medical provider, identified as Dr. Sam, cut him off methadone through a precipitated Suboxone withdrawal, causing severe pain and a seizure. In his objection, Plaintiff sought to add civil-rights claims concerning personnel and events at the Maine Correctional Center and Maine State Prison.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Magistrate Judge John C. Nivison recommended dismissal of Plaintiff's claims except the excessive-force claim against Officer Puzzuto. Plaintiff timely objected, challenged dismissal of his medication-withdrawal claim, supplied additional allegations against jail medical provider Dr. Sam, sought to add claims against personnel at other institutions, and requested appointed counsel. The district court adopted the recommendation in part, allowed the case to proceed against Officer Puzzuto and Dr. Sam under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, dismissed the remaining original claims without prejudice, denied joinder of proposed defendants from other institutions, and denied counsel without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Stewart v. Mason, No. 1:21-cv-00321, 2022 WL 1997213, at *2 (D. Me. June 6, 2022)
- D.S. v. Spurwink Servs., Inc., 2013 ME 31, ¶ 18, 65 A.3d 1196, 1200
- Demmons v. Tritch, 484 F. Supp. 2d 177, 179 (D. Me. 2007)
- Hill v. Kwan, 2009 ME 4, ¶¶ 5–6, 962 A.2d 963, 965–66
- Carleton v. Piscataquis Cnty. Jail, No. 1:23-cv-00253-JAW, 2023 WL 5271985, at *5 (D. Me. Aug. 16, 2023)
- Carleton v. Piscataquis Cnty. Jail, 2023 WL 5834803 (D. Me. Sept. 8, 2023)