

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Silva v. Department of Corrections

No. 2:25-cv-1591-DMC-P (E.D. Cal. June 13, 2025) · No. 2:25-cv-1591-DMC-P · Decided June 16, 2025

SUMMARY

The court screened a prisoner’s 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint alleging that an incorrect “R-suffix” classification in his central file caused restrictions and safety concerns. The court held that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the only named defendant, is immune from suit under the Eleventh Amendment, but granted Plaintiff leave to amend to name appropriate prison officials. Plaintiff was ordered to file a first amended complaint within 30 days of service.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Dennis M. Cota
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	June 16, 2025
DOCKET	2:25-cv-1591-DMC-P
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Prisoner civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983; the court screened the original complaint under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Mandatory screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; the court determines whether the complaint is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim, or seeks monetary relief from an immune defendant, and whether it satisfies Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court order designated per curiam and no precedential status is stated.
PARTIES	Albert Silva v. Department of Corrections

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- eleventh amendment immunity
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, sued as the Department of Corrections, is immune from Plaintiff's § 1983 action under the Eleventh Amendment.
2. Whether Plaintiff's complaint satisfies the pleading requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8 and states a potentially viable constitutional claim against an appropriate prison official.
3. Whether Plaintiff should be granted leave to amend rather than have the action dismissed with prejudice.

HOLDINGS

1. A state agency responsible for the incarceration and correction of prisoners is a state agency for Eleventh Amendment purposes and is immune from suit in federal court absent an applicable exception. The action therefore cannot proceed against the Department of Corrections as the sole named defendant.
2. A prisoner complaint must provide a short and plain statement giving fair notice of the claim and must allege specific acts by each defendant that support the asserted constitutional violation; vague and conclusory allegations are insufficient.
3. When the deficiencies in a prisoner civil-rights complaint could potentially be cured by amendment, the plaintiff must be given an opportunity to amend before dismissal of the entire action.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“... short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” (at 1)

“The Eleventh Amendment prohibits federal courts from hearing suits brought against a state both by its own citizens, as well as by citizens of other states.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff, an inmate at Folsom State Prison, alleged that his central file incorrectly contains an R-suffix identifying him as a sex offender. He asserted that a state court had ordered his arrest and related records sealed, but the prison allegedly failed to destroy the records, resulting in the classification. Plaintiff claimed that the classification limits his participation in programs and may expose him to safety risks, and he sought an injunction requiring destruction of the records and removal of the classification.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff, a state prisoner proceeding pro se, filed an original complaint seeking injunctive relief against the Department of Corrections based on an allegedly erroneous R-suffix classification in his central file. On screening, the court determined that the sole named defendant appeared to be a state agency immune from suit under the Eleventh Amendment. The court dismissed the complaint with leave to amend and gave Plaintiff 30 days to file a first amended complaint.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Olivas v. Nevada ex rel. Dep't of Corr.*, 856 F.3d 1281, 1282 (9th Cir. 2017)
- *Brooks v. Sulphur Springs Valley Elec. Coop.*, 951 F.2d 1050, 1053 (9th Cir. 1991)
- *Lucas v. Dep't of Corr.*, 66 F.3d 245, 248 (9th Cir. 1995) (per curiam)
- *Taylor v. List*, 880 F.2d 1040, 1045 (9th Cir. 1989)
- *Alabama v. Pugh*, 438 U.S. 781, 782 (1978) (per curiam)
- *Hale v. Arizona*, 993 F.2d 1387, 1398-99 (9th Cir. 1993) (en banc)
- *McHenry v. Renne*, 84 F.3d 1172, 1177 (9th Cir. 1996)
- *Kimes v. Stone*, 84 F.3d 1121, 1129 (9th Cir. 1996)
- *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126, 1131 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc)
- *Ferdik v. Bonzelet*, 963 F.2d 1258, 1260-62 (9th Cir. 1992)
- *King v. Atiyeh*, 814 F.2d 565, 567 (9th Cir. 1987)
- *Ellis v. Cassidy*, 625 F.2d 227 (9th Cir. 1980)
- *May v. Enomoto*, 633 F.2d 164, 167 (9th Cir. 1980)
- *Johnson v. Duffy*, 588 F.2d 740, 743 (9th Cir. 1978)
- *Nevijel v. North Coast Life Ins. Co.*, 651 F.2d 671, 673 (9th Cir. 1981)

OPINION

(PC) *Silva v. Department of Corrections*

PER CURIAM.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10 11 ALBERT SILVA, No. 2:25-cv-1591-DMC-P 12 Plaintiff, 13 v. ORDER

14 DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS,

15 Defendant. 16

17 Plaintiff, a prisoner proceeding pro se, brings this civil rights action pursuant to 18 42 U.S.C. §
1983. Pending before the Court is Plaintiff's original complaint, ECF No. 1. 19 The Court is
required to screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief 20 against a governmental entity
or officer or employee of a governmental entity. See 28 U.S.C. 21 § 1915A(a). This provision also
applies if the plaintiff was incarcerated at the time the action was 22 initiated even if the litigant
was subsequently released from custody. See *Olivas v. Nevada ex rel. 23 Dep't of Corr.*, 856 F.3d
1281, 1282 (9th Cir. 2017). The Court must dismiss a complaint or 24 portion thereof if it: (1) is
frivolous or malicious; (2) fails to state a claim upon which relief can 25 be granted; or (3) seeks
monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. See 26 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)

(1), (2). 27 /// 28 /// 1 Moreover, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure require that complaints contain a 2 “. . . short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). This means that claims must be stated simply, concisely, and directly. See 4 McHenry v. Renne, 84 F.3d 1172, 1177 (9th Cir. 1996) (referring to Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(e)(1)). 5 These rules are satisfied if the complaint gives the defendant fair notice of the plaintiff’s claim 6 and the grounds upon which it rests. See Kimes v. Stone, 84 F.3d 1121, 1129 (9th Cir. 1996). 7 Because Plaintiff must allege with at least some degree of particularity overt acts by specific 8 defendants which support the claims, vague and conclusory allegations fail to satisfy this 9 standard. Additionally, it is impossible for the Court to conduct the screening required by law 10 when the allegations are vague and conclusory. 11

12 I. PLAINTIFF’S ALLEGATIONS

13 Plaintiff, an inmate at Folsom State Prison, names as the only defendant 14 “Department of Corrections,” elsewhere referred to in the complaint as the “Department of 15 Corrections and Rehabilitation,” presumably meaning the California Department of Corrections 16 and Rehabilitation. See ECF No. 1. Plaintiff claims that his central file incorrectly contains an 17 “R-suffix,” which prevents Plaintiff from participating in certain programs and which can result 18 in a risk to his safety from other inmates who know of the classification. See id. at 3. Plaintiff 19 states that an “R-suffix” labels an inmate as a sex offender. See id. Plaintiff states that his arrest 20 and related records have been ordered by the state court to be sealed but that, despite this order, 21 the prison has failed to destroy these records and, as a result, his central file lists him as a sex 22 offender with an “R-suffix.” See id. Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief in the form of an order 23 directing the prison to destroy the sealed records and remove the “R-suffix” classification from 24 his central file. See id. at 4. 25 /// 26 /// 27 /// 28 ///

1 II. DISCUSSION

2 Plaintiff’s action cannot proceed as against the only named defendant, 3 “Department of Corrections,” which appears to refer to the California Department of Corrections 4 and Rehabilitation. The Eleventh Amendment prohibits federal courts from hearing suits brought 5 against a state both by its own citizens, as well as by citizens of other states. See Brooks v. 6 Sulphur Springs Valley Elec. Coop., 951 F.2d 1050, 1053 (9th Cir. 1991). This prohibition 7 extends to suits against states themselves, and to suits against state agencies. See Lucas v. Dep’t 8 of Corr., 66 F.3d 245, 248 (9th Cir. 1995) (per curiam); Taylor v. List, 880 F.2d 1040, 1045 (9th 9 Cir. 1989). A state’s agency responsible for incarceration and correction of prisoners is a state 10 agency for purposes of the Eleventh Amendment. See Alabama v. Pugh, 438 U.S. 781, 782 11 (1978) (per curiam); Hale v. Arizona, 993 F.2d 1387, 1398-99 (9th Cir. 1993) (en banc). 12 Plaintiff will be provided an opportunity to amend his complaint to name the 13 appropriate prison official(s) who can answer to Plaintiff’s claim regarding documents in his 14 central file inappropriately reflecting an “R-suffix” classification. 15

16 III. CONCLUSION

17 Because it is possible that the deficiencies identified in this order may be cured by 18 amending the complaint, Plaintiff is entitled to leave to amend prior to dismissal of the entire 19 action. See Lopez v. Smith, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126, 1131 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc). Plaintiff is 20 informed that, as a general rule, an amended complaint supersedes the original complaint. See 21 Ferdik v. Bonzelet, 963 F.2d 1258, 1262 (9th Cir. 1992). Thus, following dismissal with leave to 22 amend, all claims alleged in the original complaint which are not alleged in the amended 23 complaint are waived. See King v. Atiyeh, 814 F.2d 565, 567 (9th Cir. 1987). Therefore, if 24 Plaintiff amends the complaint, the Court cannot refer to the prior pleading in order to make 25 Plaintiff's amended complaint complete. See Local Rule 220. An amended complaint must be 26 complete in itself without reference to any prior pleading. See id. 27 / / / 28 / / /] If Plaintiff chooses to amend the complaint, Plaintiff must demonstrate how the 2 || conditions complained of have resulted in a deprivation of Plaintiffs constitutional rights. See 3 || Ellis v. Cassidy, 625 F.2d 227 (9th Cir. 1980). The complaint must allege in specific terms how 4 | each named defendant is involved and must set forth some affirmative link or connection between 5 || each defendant's actions and the claimed deprivation. See May v. Enomoto, 633 F.2d 164, 167 6 || (9th Cir. 1980); Johnson v. Duffy, 588 F.2d 740, 743 (9th Cir. 1978). 7 Finally, Plaintiff is warned that failure to file an amended complaint within the 8 | time provided in this order may be grounds for dismissal of this action. See Ferdik, 963 F.2d at 9 || 1260-61; see also Local Rule 110. Plaintiffis also warned that a complaint which fails to comply 10 || with Rule 8 may, in the Court's discretion, be dismissed with prejudice pursuant to Rule 41(b). 11 || See Nevijel v. North Coast Life Ins. Co., 651 F.2d 671, 673 (9th Cir. 1981). 12 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 13 1. Plaintiff's complaint is dismissed with leave to amend; and 14 2. Plaintiff shall file a first amended complaint within 30 days of the date of 15 || service of this order. 16 = Dated: June 13, 2025 GC
18 DENNIS M. COTA
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE
19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28