

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

William Rouser v. Julia Gamboa, et al.

Rouser v. Gamboa · No. 2:19-cv-01233-DJC-DMC · Decided September 17, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of California adopted the magistrate judge’s findings and recommendations and granted defendants’ motion for summary judgment. The court held that the plaintiff failed to exhaust administrative remedies under the Prison Litigation Reform Act for his deliberate-indifference and retaliation claims. The action was dismissed, and the Clerk was directed to enter judgment and close the case.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Daniel Calabretta
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	September 17, 2025
DOCKET	2:19-cv-01233-DJC-DMC
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff, a state prisoner proceeding pro se under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, objected to a magistrate judge's findings and recommendations concerning defendants' motion for summary judgment based on failure to exhaust administrative remedies under the PLRA.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	De novo review of the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and Local Rule 304(f); summary judgment where there is no genuine dispute of material fact and the legal significance of undisputed facts is at issue.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order
PARTIES	William Rouser v. Julia Gamboa, et al.

TOPICS

- prisoners rights
- section 1983
- summary judgment
- civil rights
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

prisoner civil rights

civil procedure

administrative exhaustion

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether summary judgment was an appropriate procedure for deciding exhaustion of administrative remedies under the PLRA where no material facts were disputed.
2. Whether grievance SAC HC 18001330 exhausted the First and Fourth Causes of Action for deliberate indifference.
3. Whether the grievance exhausted the Second Cause of Action for retaliation despite not naming the defendants and containing only a brief retaliation allegation.
4. Whether summary judgment could be entered for non-appearing defendants based on plaintiff's failure to exhaust.

HOLDINGS

1. Summary judgment is an appropriate device for resolving exhaustion under the PLRA when the record presents no genuine dispute of material fact and only the legal significance of undisputed facts remains in dispute.
2. The grievance did not exhaust the First or Fourth Causes of Action for deliberate indifference because it preceded the events underlying the First Cause of Action and had no clear connection to the 2017 events underlying the Fourth Cause of Action.
3. The Second Cause of Action was not exhausted because the grievance's single, minimally detailed reference to retaliation did not comply with California's healthcare grievance procedure or otherwise provide sufficient information to alert prison officials to the nature of the alleged wrong.
4. Summary judgment was appropriate for non-appearing defendants Weyer and Montoya because plaintiff's failure to exhaust barred proceeding on the claims against all defendants and plaintiff had a full and fair opportunity to litigate exhaustion.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“nothing in the [PLRA] imposes a ‘name all defendants’ requirement” (at 2)

“alert the prison to the nature of the wrong for which redress is sought and provide sufficient information to allow prison officials to take appropriate responsive measures.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Rouser brought First, Second, and Fourth Causes of Action alleging deliberate indifference and retaliation. He relied principally on healthcare grievance SAC HC 18001330, filed May 23, 2018, which concerned suicidal ideation and alleged deliberate indifference, while the First Cause of Action concerned events on June 5, 2018, and the Fourth Cause of Action concerned events in 2017. The grievance mentioned retaliation only briefly and did not provide sufficient detail to alert prison officials to the nature of the retaliation claim. Two defendants,

Tracy Weyer and Dr. Montoya, had not appeared, but the court concluded that the exhaustion determination applied to all defendants.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The matter was referred to a magistrate judge under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and the Eastern District of California local rules. The magistrate judge issued findings and recommendations on February 5, 2025, and plaintiff timely objected. After conducting de novo review, the district court adopted the findings and recommendations in full, granted defendants' motion for summary judgment, dismissed the action for failure to exhaust administrative remedies, and directed entry of judgment.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Albino v. Baca, 747 F.3d 1162, 1168 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Hill v. Ayala, No. 2:19-cv-0184-TLN-DB, 2021 WL 3403793, at *5 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 4, 2021)
- Jones v. Bock, 549 U.S. 199, 217 (2007)
- Reyes v. Smith, 810 F.3d 654, 658–59 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Columbia Steel Fabricators, Inc. v. Ahlstrom Recovery, 44 F.3d 800, 803 (9th Cir. 1995)
- Gallardo v. Bourne, No. 20-cv-09184-JSW, 2023 WL 3569997, at *12–13 (N.D. Cal. May 19, 2023)

OPINION

Gamboa

PER CURIAM.

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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

10

11 WILLIAM ROUSER, No. 2:19-cv-01233-DJC-DMC

12 Plaintiff, 13 v. ORDER 14 JULIA GAMBOA, et al., 15 Defendants. 16 17 Plaintiff, a prisoner
proceeding pro se, brings this civil rights action under 42 18 U.S.C. § 1983. The matter was
referred to a United States Magistrate Judge pursuant 19 to Eastern District of California local
rules. 20 On February 5, 2025, the Magistrate Judge filed Findings and 21 Recommendations
herein which were served on the parties, and which contained 22 notice that the parties may file
objections within the time specified therein. (ECF No. 23 95.) Timely Objections to the Findings
and Recommendations have been filed. (ECF
24 No. 96.)

25 In accordance with the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C) and Local Rule 26 304(f), this

Court has conducted a de novo review of this case. On review, the Court 27 finds that the Findings and Recommendations are supported by the record and the 28 proper analysis. As such, the Court adopts in full the Findings and Recommendations. 1 Where the record permits, summary judgment is “the appropriate device” for 2 resolving whether administrative remedies have been exhausted under the PLRA is 3 summary judgment. *Albino v. Baca*, 747 F.3d 1162, 1168 (9th Cir. 2014). Here, there 4 is no dispute of material fact; only the legal significance of those facts is in dispute. 5 Thus, the record permits the Court to determine on summary judgment whether 6 Plaintiff’s claims have been exhausted for purposes of the PLRA. 7 As to the exhaustion of Plaintiff’s First and Fourth Causes of Action for 8 deliberate indifference, Plaintiff’s claims have not been exhausted. Healthcare 9 grievance SAC HC 18001330 did raise allegations regarding Plaintiff’s suicidal 10 ideation and potential deliberate indifference to that suicidal ideation. (See ECF 92-1 11 at 82.) But that grievance was filed on May 23, 2018. The issues raised therein have 12 no clear connection to the 2017 events at issue in Plaintiff’s Fourth Cause of Action. 13 (See SAC at 3–4.) While it seems that the issues raised in this grievance are relevant 14 background to the claims raised in Plaintiff’s First Cause of Action, the actual events at 15 issue in that claim took place on June 5, 2018. (See *id.* at 1–2.) Thus, it is impossible 16 for SAC HC 18001330 (which, as noted, was filed in May of 2018) to have exhausted 17 the claims in Plaintiff’s First Cause of Action, as the grievance preceded the events that 18 form the basis of that claim. Plaintiff did raise the June 5, 2018, events at issue in his 19 First Cause of Action in his appeal of the Institutional Level Response to SAC HC 20 18001330. (ECF No. 92-1 at 81.) However, as a new issue, this needed to be raised in 21 a new grievance to be properly exhausted. See *Hill v. Ayala*, No. 2:19-cv-0184-TLN- 22 DB, 2021 WL 3403793, at *5 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 4, 2021) (collecting cases). As such, this 23 also does not suffice to satisfy the exhaustion requirement as to the First and Fourth 24 Causes of Action. 25 Regarding Plaintiff’s Second Cause of Action for retaliation, this claim is also not 26 exhausted. In their Motion, Defendants argued that SAC HC 18001330, which 27 mentions retaliation, could not have exhausted that claim because the grievance did 28 not name Defendants Roth or Gonzalez. (ECF No. 92-3 at 8.) However, the PLRA does 1 not require a defendant to be named in a grievance for a claim to be properly 2 exhausted. *Jones v. Bock*, 549 U.S. 199, 217 (2007) (noting that “nothing in the [PLRA] 3 imposes a ‘name all defendants’ requirement” but adding that proper exhaustion 4 requires compliance with the grievance policy). Nevertheless, exhaustion under the 5 PLRA does still require a plaintiff to comply with California’s healthcare grievance 6 procedure. That procedure requires that “[t]he patient . . . document clearly and 7 coherently all information known and available to them regarding the issue.” 15 Cal. 8 Code Regs. § 3999.227(g). The regulations also require the inclusion of information 9 regarding all involved staff members, but provide that “[i]f the patient does not have 10 information to identify involved staff member(s), the patient shall provide any other 11 available information that may assist in processing the health care grievance.” *Id.* 12 § 3999.227(g)(1)–(2). Moreover, even if a grievance does not comply with the specific 13 requirements of the healthcare grievance procedure, they are

sufficient to “alert the 14 prison to the nature of the wrong for which redress is sought and provide sufficient 15 information to allow prison officials to take appropriate responsive measures.” Reyes 16 v. Smith, 810 F.3d 654, 658–59 (9th Cir. 2016). 17 While it is not necessary that Plaintiff specifically name the Defendants, 18 Plaintiff’s grievances were not sufficient to satisfy California’s healthcare grievance 19 procedure or otherwise put the institution on notice about the wrong Plaintiff was 20 raising so that prison officials could take appropriate responsive measures. 21 Healthcare grievance SAC HC 18001330 does mention retaliation, but the discussion 22 is limited, saying only that he suffered retaliation for “contacting coleman lawyers and 23 telling the courts I was being denied mental health treatment” (ECF No. 92-1 at 24 80.) The remainder of Plaintiff’s grievance focuses on the alleged actions of 25 Defendant Marquez’s conduct and treatment of Plaintiff and allegations that 26 Defendant Marquez was deliberately indifferent. (Id. at 80, 82.) The singular 27 allegation that Plaintiff was suffering retaliation, without any further detail or 28 information that could alert prison officials to the nature of Plaintiff’s claims, is 1 | insufficient to exhaust Plaintiff’s Second Cause of Action. Particularly so where that 2 | allegation is contained within a grievance focused on allegations concerning actions 3 | of adifferent Defendant. As such, Defendant has met their burden to show that 4 | Plaintiff failed to administratively exhaust his Second Cause of Action. 5 The Court notes that there are two additional Defendants who have never 6 | appeared in this action: Tracy Weyer and Dr. Montoya. Montoya is named in Plaintiff’s 7 | First and Fourth Causes of Action. Weyer is named in Plaintiff’s Second Cause of 8 | Action. Given Plaintiff’s failure to administratively exhaust his claims bars Plaintiff from 9 | proceeding on those claims for all defendants, and Plaintiff has had a “full and fair 10 | opportunity to brief and present evidence” on this issue, summary judgment is 11 | appropriate for both appearing and non-appearing Defendants. See Columbia Steel 12 | Fabricators, Inc. v. Ahlstrom Recovery, 44 F.3d 800, 803 (9th Cir. 1995); see also 13 | Gallardo v. Bourne, No. 20-cv-09184-JSW, 2023 WL 3569997, at *12-13 (N.D. Cal. May 14 | 19, 2023). Thus, the Court grants summary judgment for non-appearing Defendants 15 | Weyer and Montoya on the same basis. 16 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: 17 1. The Findings and Recommendations are ADOPTED IN FULL; 18 2. Defendants’ Motion for Summary Judgment (ECF No. 92) is GRANTED; 19 3. This action is dismissed for failure to exhaust administrative remedies 20 prior to filing suit; and 21 4. The Clerk of the Court is directed to enter judgment and close this file. 22 53 IT IS SO ORDERED. 24 | Dated: _September 16, 2025 Donel J bnetto Hon. Daniel alabretta

25 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

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