

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Guerrero v. Santa Rita Jail, et al.

Guerrero · No. 23-cv-04159-VC · Decided July 9, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California orders service of Russell Guerrero’s second amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint on Doctors Magot and Cooper. The court finds that the complaint states a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment claim alleging objectively deliberate indifference to Guerrero’s worsening skin rash and sets deadlines for responsive pleadings and dispositive motions.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Vince Chhabria
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	July 9, 2025
DOCKET	23-cv-04159-VC
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Order screening a detainee's second amended 42 U.S.C. § 1983 complaint and directing service on two medical defendants.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a); the court liberally construes pro se pleadings and dismisses claims that are frivolous or malicious, fail to state a claim, or seek monetary relief from an immune defendant.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court order; precedential status is unknown.
PARTIES	Russell Guerrero v. Santa Rita Jail, Dr. Magot, Dr. Cooper, et al.

TOPICS

- section 1983
- prisoners rights
- due process
- health law
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Guerrero's second amended complaint stated a Fourteenth Amendment claim for inadequate medical care against Dr. Magot and Dr. Cooper.
2. Whether the complaint should be served on Dr. Magot and Dr. Cooper after screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

HOLDINGS

1. A pretrial detainee states a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment medical-care claim against individual defendants by alleging that they intentionally made decisions concerning the detainee's confinement conditions, those conditions posed a substantial risk of serious harm, the defendants failed to take objectively reasonable available measures to abate the risk, and that failure caused injury. Guerrero's allegations that Dr. Magot and Dr. Cooper displayed reckless disregard for his worsening rash were sufficient at the screening stage.
2. The second amended complaint was not subject to dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A because it stated a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment claim against Dr. Magot and Dr. Cooper; the court therefore ordered service on those defendants.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The four-part test articulated in Gordon requires the plaintiff to prove more than negligence, but less than subjective intent – something akin to reckless disregard.” (at 1125)

“The court construes Guerrero’s complaint as naming Doctors Magot and Cooper as defendants in this action and finds that he has stated a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment claim against them for displaying reckless disregard to his worsening skin rash.”

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Guerrero, a pretrial detainee at Alameda County Santa Rita Jail, was moved to rooms near showers that he alleged contained black mold. He developed a spreading rash after receiving medication containing sulfonamides or sulfasalazine, and alleged that the rash covered approximately 30 percent of his body, produced weeping lesions, and remained open for months. He alleged that Wellpath nurses and Dr. Magot and Dr. Cooper repeatedly told him the condition was healing, although he later showed the lesions to mental-health clinicians and several doctors and was eventually taken to Highland Hospital.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Guerrero filed a civil rights complaint alleging inadequate treatment of a rash by Santa Rita Jail and Wellpath. The magistrate judge dismissed the original complaint with leave to amend, and the court again dismissed Guerrero's nearly identical first amended complaint with leave to amend. After Guerrero filed a second amended complaint, the court found a cognizable Fourteenth Amendment medical-care claim against Dr. Magot and Dr. Cooper and ordered service.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Dep't, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1988)
- West v. Atkins, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988)
- Lemire v. California Dep't of Corrections & Rehabilitation, 726 F.3d 1062, 1074 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Leer v. Murphy, 844 F.2d 628, 633-34 (9th Cir. 1988)
- Gordon v. County of Orange, 888 F.3d 1118, 1122 & n.4, 1125 (9th Cir. 2018)
- Alexander v. Nguyen, 78 F.4th 1140, 1144-46 (9th Cir. 2023)
- Rand v. Rowland, 154 F.3d 952, 953-954 (9th Cir. 1998) (en banc)
- Wyatt v. Terhune, 315 F.3d 1108, 1120 n. 4 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Woods v. Carey, 684 F.3d 934, 940-941 (9th Cir. 2012)
- Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317 (1986)

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