

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA  
INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

RYAN B. CAMDEN,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 1:24-cv-01139-SEB-KMB
	)	
O'DELL Sargent,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	

**ORDER SCREENING COMPLAINT AND DIRECTING FURTHER PROCEEDINGS**

Ryan Camden alleges that his custodians at Plainfield Correctional Facility failed to protect him from violence by other inmates. Because he is a prisoner, the Court must screen his complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A.

**I. Screening Standard**

When screening a complaint, the Court must dismiss any portion that is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim for relief, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b). To determine whether the complaint states a claim, the Court applies the same standard as when addressing a motion to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). *See Schillinger v. Kiley*, 954 F.3d 990, 993 (7th Cir. 2020). Under that standard, a complaint must include "enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). The Court construes *pro se* complaints liberally and holds them to a "less stringent standard than pleadings drafted by lawyers." *Cesal v. Moats*, 851 F.3d 714, 720 (7th Cir. 2017).

## II. The Complaint

Mr. Camden asserts claims for damages and injunctive relief against one defendant, Sergeant O'Dell. He bases his claims on the following allegations, which the Court accepts as true at the pleading stage. *See Lisby v. Henderson*, 74 F.4th 470, 472 (7th Cir. 2023).

Mr. Camden informed Sergeant O'Dell that he was at risk of being attacked by gang members and asked to be placed in protective custody. He reported that he had previously been in protective custody at three other prisons. Sergeant O'Dell denied Mr. Camden's request.

Mr. Camden hit Jimmy Smith. (It is unclear whether Mr. Smith is a prisoner or a staff member.) He was convicted of a disciplinary violation and placed in segregation. However, staff members understood that Mr. Camden hit Mr. Smith because he wanted to be placed in segregation for his safety, so they removed him back to the general population after only a few weeks.

Mr. Camden next sought to avoid danger by getting placed on suicide watch. Once, he had to cut himself in order to be placed on suicide watch, which caused him serious injuries.

Officers used unnecessary force against Mr. Camden in September 2023. The complaint does not clarify whether Sergeant O'Dell was involved in this incident.

## III. Discussion of Claims

Claims for injunctive relief must be **dismissed as moot** because Mr. Camden is no longer incarcerated at Plainfield Correctional Facility. "[W]hen a prisoner who seeks injunctive relief for a condition specific to a particular prison is transferred out of that prison, the need for relief . . . become[s] moot." *Lehn v. Holmes*, 364 F.3d 862, 871 (7th Cir. 2004).

Any claim for damages based on the September 2023 use-of-force incident must be **dismissed for failure to state a claim** because Mr. Camden does not allege that Sergeant O'Dell played any role in the incident. "Liability under [42 U.S.C.] § 1983 is direct rather than vicarious;

supervisors are responsible for their own acts but not for those of subordinates, or for failing to ensure that subordinates carry out their tasks correctly." *Horshaw v. Casper*, 910 F.3d 1027, 1029 (7th Cir. 2018). "[I]ndividual liability under § 1983 . . . requires personal involvement in the alleged constitutional deprivation." *Colbert v. City of Chicago*, 851 F.3d 649, 657 (7th Cir. 2017) (internal quotation omitted). The complaint does not support a reasonable inference that Sergeant O'Dell was involved in or responsible for the use of force.

Finally, any Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim against Sergeant O'Dell also must be **dismissed for failure to state a claim** upon which relief may be granted. The Eighth Amendment imposes on prison officials "a duty to protect prisoners from violence at the hands of other prisoners." *LaBrec v. Walker*, 948 F.3d 836, 841 (7th Cir. 2020) (citing *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 833 (1994)). Yet, to prevail on a failure-to-protect claim, the plaintiff "must show that the prison official was deliberately indifferent to an excessive risk to the prisoner's health or safety." *Id.* "[T]he prison official must have actual, not merely constructive, knowledge of the risk to be liable." *Id.* "[A] complaint that identifies a specific, credible, and imminent risk of serious harm and identifies the prospective assailant typically will support an inference that the official to whom the complaint was communicated had actual knowledge of the risk." *Gevas v. McLaughlin*, 798 F.3d 475, 481 (7th Cir. 2015).

Put otherwise, an Eighth Amendment failure-to-protect claim includes the following elements:

1. There was a strong likelihood that Plaintiff would be seriously harmed as the result of an assault.
2. Defendant was aware of this strong likelihood that Plaintiff would be seriously harmed as the result of an assault or that another prisoner would seriously harm a prisoner in Plaintiff's situation.
3. Defendant consciously failed to take reasonable measures to prevent the assault.

4. Plaintiff would not have been harmed, or would have suffered less harm, if Defendant had taken reasonable measures.

*See* 7th Cir. Civ. Pattern Jury Instr. 7.16; *LaBrec*, 948 F.3d at 841.

Mr. Camden's failure-to-protect claim against Sergeant O'Dell fails for two reasons. First, Mr. Camden alleges that he requested protective custody from Sergeant O'Dell and informed him that he was at risk of attack by gang members. But Mr. Camden describes the threat he faced and the information he provided Sergeant O'Dell only generically. Mr. Camden does not indicate that he told Sergeant O'Dell who was likely to attack him, or when, or for what reason. He does not support a reasonable inference that he alerted Sergeant O'Dell to a "specific, credible, and imminent" risk. *Gevas*, 798 F.3d 481.

Regardless, Mr. Camden does not allege that he was ultimately attacked by the gang members whose threat he allegedly reported to Sergeant O'Dell. Rather, Mr. Camden took matters into his own hands and inflicted harm upon himself—figuratively, with respect to his disciplinary conviction, and literally, with respect to his episode of self-harm. The Eighth Amendment provides a vehicle for holding Sergeant O'Dell accountable for failing to prevent harm he knew was likely to occur. But there are insufficient allegations that Sergeant O'Dell knew the harm Mr. Camden ultimately suffered in this case was likely to occur.

#### **IV. Conclusion and Further Proceedings**

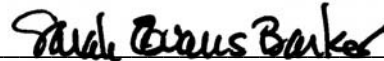
The complaint is **dismissed** pursuant to § 1915A for **failure to state a claim** upon which relief may be granted.

Mr. Camden will have **through June 19, 2025**, to file an amended complaint that alleges a plausible claim for relief. He must label his filing "Amended Complaint" and include the case number, 1:24-cv-01139-SEB-KMB. Failure to file an amended complaint in the time provided will result in the dismissal of this action without further warning or opportunity to show cause.

The amended complaint will completely replace the original. *See Beal v. Beller*, 847 F.3d 897, 901 (7th Cir. 2017) ("For pleading purposes, once an amended complaint is filed, the original complaint drops out of the picture."). Therefore, it must set out every defendant, claim, and factual allegation the plaintiff wishes to pursue in this action.

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

Date: 5/21/2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah Evans Barker", is written over a horizontal line.

SARAH EVANS BARKER, JUDGE  
United States District Court  
Southern District of Indiana

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