UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE DISTRICT OF IDAHO

NATHAN NICHOLAS HELBURN,

Plaintiff,

v.

CORIZON, INC.; WARDEN RAMIREZ; BRUCE COOPER; MATTHEW VALLEY; DR. APRIL DAWSON; JOSHUA TUCKETT; LT. WAYNE WILSON; SGT. JENKINS; GARY ACREE; ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL; and JANE AND JOHN DOES,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:19-cy-00416-DCN

INITIAL REVIEW ORDER BY SCREENING JUDGE

The Clerk of Court conditionally filed Plaintiff Nathan Nicholas Helburn's Complaint as a result of Plaintiff's status as an inmate. The Court now reviews the Complaint to determine whether it should be summarily dismissed in whole or in part under 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. Having reviewed the record, and otherwise being fully informed, the Court enters the following Order directing Plaintiff to file an amended complaint if Plaintiff intends to proceed.

1. Screening Requirement

The Court must review complaints filed by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a governmental entity, as well as complaints filed in forma pauperis, to determine whether summary dismissal is appropriate. The Court must dismiss a complaint or any portion thereof that states a frivolous or

malicious claim, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b).

2. Pleading Standard

A complaint must contain "a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief." Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). A complaint fails to state a claim for relief under Rule 8 if the factual assertions in the complaint, taken as true, are insufficient for the reviewing court plausibly "to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009). "Threadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action, supported by mere conclusory statements, do not suffice." *Id.* In other words, although Rule 8 "does not require detailed factual allegations, ... it demands more than an unadorned, the-defendant-unlawfully-harmed-me accusation." *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted). If the facts pleaded are "merely consistent with a defendant's liability," or if there is an "obvious alternative explanation" that would not result in liability, the complaint has not stated a claim for relief that is plausible on its face. *Id.* at 678, 682 (internal quotation marks omitted).

3. Factual Allegations

Plaintiff is a prisoner in the custody of the Idaho Department of Correction ("IDOC"), currently incarcerated at Idaho Maximum Security Institution. Plaintiff suffers from chronic myeloid leukemia. Compl., Dkt. 1, at 3. Plaintiff complains of the medical treatment he received, or did not receive, in September or October of 2015. *Id.* at 3–8, 11–13.

Plaintiff also asserts that a correctional sergeant would not help him get medical

care "during 2015–2016." *Id.* at 9. Finally, Plaintiff alleges that another correctional sergeant did not help Plaintiff get medical care and gave Plaintiff "the run around" with respect to Plaintiff's concern forms and health services requests; Plaintiff states that this conduct occurred sometime between 2015 to an unknown date. *Id.* at 10 ("2015–not sure date").

Plaintiff asserts claims under the Eighth Amendment and Idaho criminal statutes. He sues (1) Corizon, Inc., the private company providing Idaho prisoners with medical care under contract with the IDOC, (2) numerous Corizon medical providers and IDOC employees, and (3) St. Luke's Hospital.

4. Discussion

Plaintiff has not alleged sufficient facts to proceed with the Complaint. In addition, the Complaint is unsigned and, therefore, subject to being stricken under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 11(a).

The Court will grant Plaintiff 28 days to file a properly signed amended complaint.

Any amended complaint should take into consideration the following.

A. Section 1983 Claims

i. <u>Standards of Law Governing § 1983 Claims</u>

Plaintiff brings claims under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the civil rights statute. To state a plausible civil rights claim, a plaintiff must allege a violation of rights protected by the Constitution or created by federal statute proximately caused by conduct of a person acting under color of state law. *Crumpton v. Gates*, 947 F.2d 1418, 1420 (9th Cir. 1991). To be liable under § 1983, "the defendant must possess a purposeful, a knowing, or possibly a

reckless state of mind." *Kingsley v. Hendrickson*, 135 S. Ct. 2466, 2472 (2015). Negligence is not actionable under § 1983, because a negligent act by a public official is not an abuse of governmental power but merely a "failure to measure up to the conduct of a reasonable person." *Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327, 332 (1986).

Prison officials and prison medical providers generally are not liable for damages in their individual capacities under § 1983 unless they personally participated in the alleged constitutional violations. *Taylor v. List*, 880 F.2d 1040, 1045 (9th Cir. 1989); *see also Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 677 ("[E]ach Government official, his or her title notwithstanding, is only liable for his or her own misconduct."). Section 1983 does not allow for recovery against an employer or principal simply because an employee or agent committed misconduct. *Taylor*, 880 F.2d at 1045.

However, "[a] defendant may be held liable as a supervisor under § 1983 'if there exists ... a sufficient causal connection between the supervisor's wrongful conduct and the constitutional violation." *Starr v. Baca*, 652 F.3d 1202, 1207 (9th Cir. 2011) (quoting *Hansen v. Black*, 885 F.2d 642, 646 (9th Cir. 1989)). A plaintiff can establish this causal connection by alleging that a defendant (1) "set[] in motion a series of acts by others"; (2) "knowingly refus[ed] to terminate a series of acts by others, which [the supervisor] knew or reasonably should have known would cause others to inflict a constitutional injury"; (3) failed to act or improperly acted in the training, supervision, or control of his subordinates"; (4) "acquiesc[ed] in the constitutional deprivation"; or (5) engag[ed] in "conduct that showed a reckless or callous indifference to the rights of others." *Id.* at 1205-09.

To bring a § 1983 claim against a municipality (local governmental entity) or a private entity performing a government function—such as Corizon—a plaintiff must allege that the execution of an official policy or unofficial custom inflicted the injury of which the plaintiff complains, as required by *Monell v. Department of Social Services of New York*, 436 U.S. 658, 694 (1978). *See also Tsao v. Desert Palace, Inc.*, 698 F.3d 1128, 1139 (9th Cir. 2012) (applying *Monell* to private entities performing a government function). Under *Monell*, the requisite elements of a § 1983 claim against a municipality or private entity performing a state function are the following: (1) the plaintiff was deprived of a constitutional right; (2) the municipality or entity had a policy or custom; (3) the policy or custom amounted to deliberate indifference to plaintiff's constitutional right; and (4) the policy or custom was the moving force behind the constitutional violation. *Mabe v. San Bernardino Cnty.*, 237 F.3d 1101, 1110-11 (9th Cir. 2001).

An unwritten policy or custom must be so "persistent and widespread" that it constitutes a "permanent and well settled" practice. *Monell*, 436 U.S. at 691 (quoting *Adickes v. S.H. Kress & Co.*, 398 U.S. 144, 167-168 (1970)). "Liability for improper custom may not be predicated on isolated or sporadic incidents; it must be founded upon practices of sufficient duration, frequency and consistency that the conduct has become a traditional method of carrying out policy." *Trevino v. Gates*, 99 F.3d 911, 918 (9th Cir. 1996).

A claim that a supervisor or training official failed to adequately train subordinates ordinarily requires that, "in light of the duties assigned to specific officers or employees[,] the need for more or different training [was] so obvious, and the inadequacy so likely to

result in the violation of constitutional rights, that the [supervisor or training official] can reasonably be said to have been deliberately indifferent to the need." *City of Canton v. Harris*, 489 U.S. 378, 390 (1989). That is, to maintain a failure-to-train claim, a plaintiff must allege facts showing a "pattern of violations" that amounts to deliberate indifference. *Connick v. Thompson*, 563 U.S. 51, 72 (2011).

Likewise, "a failure to supervise that is sufficiently inadequate may amount to deliberate indifference" that supports a § 1983 claim, but there generally must be a pattern of violations sufficient to render the need for further supervision obvious. *Dougherty v. City of Covina*, 654 F.3d 892, 900 (9th Cir. 2011) (internal quotation marks omitted). That is, if a supervisory or training official had "knowledge of the unconstitutional conditions" through such a pattern of violations—including knowledge of the "culpable actions of his subordinates"—yet failed to act to remedy those conditions, that official can be said to have acquiesced "in the unconstitutional conduct of his subordinates" such that a causal connection between the supervisor and the constitutional violation is plausible. *Starr*, 652 F.3d at 1208.

A plaintiff cannot simply restate these standards of law in a complaint. Instead, a plaintiff must provide specific facts supporting the elements of each claim and must allege facts showing a causal link between each defendant and Plaintiff's injury or damage. Alleging "the mere possibility of misconduct" is not enough. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679.

ii. <u>Plaintiff's Claims Appear Untimely</u>

Plaintiff's § 1983 claims appear to be barred by the statute of limitations. Federal civil rights actions arising in Idaho are governed by a two-year statute of limitations. Idaho

Code § 5-219; *see also Wilson v. Garcia*, 471 U.S. 261, 280 (1985) (holding that state statute of limitation for personal injury actions governs § 1983 actions), *abrogated on other grounds by Jones v. R.R. Donnelley & Sons Co.*, 541 U.S. 369 (2004).

Although the state statute of limitations governs the time period for filing a § 1983 claim, federal law governs when that claim accrues, or arises. *Elliott v. City of Union City*, 25 F.3d 800, 801-02 (9th Cir. 1994). Under the "discovery rule," a claim accrues "when the plaintiff knows or has reason to know of the injury" that is the basis of the claim. *Lukovsky v. City & Cty. of San Francisco*, 535 F.3d 1044, 1048 (9th Cir. 2008) (internal quotation marks omitted). That is, the statute of limitations begins to run when the plaintiff becomes aware of the actual injury—not "when the plaintiff suspects a legal wrong." *Id*.

If a plaintiff cannot show that his claim accrued during the statute of limitations period, he still may file a lawsuit beyond the limitations deadline if he can show that the statute should have been tolled (or stopped) for a certain period of time during the deadline period within which he should have filed the lawsuit. Pursuant to the Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA"), the "statute of limitations must be tolled while a prisoner completes the mandatory exhaustion process." *Brown v. Valoff*, 422 F.3d 926, 943 (9th Cir. 2005).

In addition to tolling under the PLRA, state tolling law applies to § 1983 actions unless important federal policy will be undermined. *See Johnson v. Railway Express Agency, Inc.*, 421 U.S. 454, 464-65 (1975); *Pesnell v. Arsenault*, 543 F.3d 1038, 1043 (9th Cir. 2008). Idaho law allows for statutory tolling of the statute of limitations for a person's juvenile status or insanity. Idaho Code § 5-230. However, because the Idaho Supreme Court has determined that "[s]tatutes of limitation in Idaho are not tolled by judicial

construction but rather by the expressed language of the statute," equitable tolling is not available in Idaho. *Wilhelm v. Frampton*, 158 P.3d 310, 312 (Idaho 2007).

The doctrine of equitable *estoppel*, however, is available in Idaho. While it "does not 'extend' a statute of limitation," equitable estoppel works in a similar manner to prevent a party who has falsely represented or concealed a material fact with actual or constructive knowledge of the truth "from pleading and utilizing the statute of limitations as a bar, although the time limit of the statute may have already run." *J.R. Simplot Co., v. Chemetics International, Inc.*, 887 P.2d 1039, 1041 (Idaho 1994). Equitable estoppel requires a showing of four elements: "(1) a false representation or concealment of a material fact with actual or constructive knowledge of the truth; (2) that the party asserting estoppel did not know or could not discover the truth; (3) that the false representation or concealment was made with the intent that it be relied upon; and (4) that the person to whom the representation was made, or from whom the facts were concealed, relied and acted upon the representation or concealment to his prejudice." *Id.*

Plaintiff filed the Complaint on October 29, 2019. Therefore, allowing for a maximum of thirty days to exhaust the prison administrative process, it appears that any claims that arose before September 29, 2017, are time-barred. If Plaintiff files an amended complaint, he must include all relevant dates and must explain why he believes his claims are not subject to dismissal as untimely.

B. Claims Based on Idaho Criminal Statutes

In addition to § 1983 claims, Plaintiff asserts violations of Idaho criminal statutes, such as those prohibiting assault with intent to murder, conspiracy. *See* Compl. at 3–9.

However, although a federal district court may exercise supplemental jurisdiction over state claims where appropriate, *see* 28 U.S.C. § 1367, the Court has no jurisdiction to hear state criminal matters.

Further, it appears that none of the criminal statutes cited by Plaintiffs creates a private right of action. In Idaho, to determine whether a private cause of action exists under a criminal statute, a court must analyze the following factors:

When a legislative provision protects a class of persons by proscribing or requiring certain conduct but does not provide a civil remedy for the violation, the court may, if it determines that the remedy is appropriate in furtherance of the purpose of the legislation and needed to assure the effectiveness of the provision, accord to an injured member of the class a right of action, using a suitable existing tort action or a new cause of action analogous to an existing tort action.

Yoakum v. Hartford Fire Ins. Co., 923 P.2d 416, 421 (Idaho 1996) (emphasis omitted) (relying on Restatement (Second) of Torts § 874A).

In *Yoakum*, the Idaho Supreme Court held that there was no private right of action under criminal statutes where those statutes were intended to protect the general public and provided for a criminal punishment, and where there was no indication that the legislature intended to create a private cause of action or that providing an additional civil remedy was necessary to assure the effectiveness of the statutes. *Id.* The same factors exist here with respect to the statutes relied upon by Plaintiff. Therefore, "[i]n the absence of strong indicia of a contrary legislative intent, [the Court] ... conclude[s] that the legislature provided precisely the remedies it considered appropriate." *Id.* (relying on *Middlesex County Sewerage Auth. v. National Sea Clammers*, 453 U.S. 1, 15 (1981).

Because there is no private right of action under the criminal statutes cited in the Complaint, those claims are implausible.

5. Standards of Law for Eighth Amendment Claims

To aid Plaintiff in drafting an amended complaint, the Court provides the following standards of law that apply to Eighth Amendment claims of inadequate medical treatment.

The Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution protects prisoners against cruel and unusual punishment. To state a claim under the Eighth Amendment, prisoners must plausibly allege that they are "incarcerated under conditions posing a substantial risk of serious harm," or that they have been deprived of "the minimal civilized measure of life's necessities" as a result of the defendants' actions. *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994) (internal quotation marks omitted). An Eighth Amendment claim requires a plaintiff to satisfy "both an objective standard—that the deprivation was serious enough to constitute cruel and unusual punishment—and a subjective standard—deliberate indifference." *Snow v. McDaniel*, 681 F.3d 978, 985 (9th Cir. 2012), *overruled in part on other grounds by Peralta v. Dillard*, 744 F.3d 1076 (9th Cir. 2014) (en banc).

The Eighth Amendment includes the right to adequate medical and mental health treatment in prison. Prison officials or prison medical providers can be held liable if their "acts or omissions [were] sufficiently harmful to evidence deliberate indifference to serious medical needs." *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976).

Regarding the objective standard for prisoners' medical care claims, "society does not expect that prisoners will have unqualified access to health care." *Hudson v. McMillian*, 503 U.S. 1, 9 (1992). Therefore, "deliberate indifference to medical needs amounts to an

Eighth Amendment violation only if those needs are 'serious.'" *Id*. The Ninth Circuit has defined a "serious medical need" in the following ways:

failure to treat a prisoner's condition [that] could result in further significant injury or the unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain[;] ... [t]he existence of an injury that a reasonable doctor or patient would find important and worthy of comment or treatment; the presence of a medical condition that significantly affects an individual's daily activities; or the existence of chronic and substantial pain

McGuckin v. Smith, 974 F.2d 1050, 1059-60 (9th Cir. 1992) (internal citations omitted), overruled on other grounds, WMX Techs., Inc. v. Miller, 104 F.3d 1133 (9th Cir. 1997) (en banc).

As to the subjective standard, "deliberate indifference entails something more than mere negligence, [but] is satisfied by something less than acts or omissions for the very purpose of causing harm or with knowledge that harm will result." *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 835. A prison official or prison medical provider acts with "deliberate indifference...only if the [prison official or provider] knows of and disregards an excessive risk to inmate health and safety." *Gibson v. Cnty. of Washoe*, 290 F.3d 1175, 1187 (9th Cir. 2002) (internal quotation marks omitted), *overruled on other grounds by Castro v. Cty. of Los Angeles*, 833 F.3d 1060 (9th Cir. 2016) (en banc). "Under this standard, the prison official must not only 'be aware of facts from which the inference could be drawn that a substantial risk of serious harm exists,' but that person 'must also draw the inference." *Toguchi v. Chung*, 391 F.3d 1051, 1057 (9th Cir. 2004) (quoting *Farmer*, 511 U.S. at 837).

In the medical context, deliberate indifference can be "manifested by prison doctors in their response to the prisoner's needs or by prison guards in intentionally denying or

delaying access to medical care or intentionally interfering with the treatment once prescribed." *Estelle*, 429 U.S. at 104-05 (footnotes omitted). Medical malpractice or negligence does not support a cause of action under the Eighth Amendment, *Broughton v. Cutter Labs.*, 622 F.2d 458, 460 (9th Cir. 1980) (per curiam), and a delay in medical treatment does not violate the Eighth Amendment unless that delay causes further harm, *McGuckin*, 974 F.2d at 1060. Additionally, there is no constitutional right to an outside medical provider of one's own choice. *See Roberts v. Spalding*, 783 F.2d 867, 870 (9th Cir. 1986) ("A prison inmate has no independent constitutional right to outside medical care additional and supplemental to the medical care provided by the prison staff within the institution.").

"If a [prison official] should have been aware of the risk, but was not, then the [official] has not violated the Eighth Amendment, no matter how severe the risk." *Gibson*, 290 F.3d at 1188. If medical personnel have been "consistently responsive to [the inmate's] medical needs," and the plaintiff has not shown that the medical personnel had "subjective knowledge and conscious disregard of a substantial risk of serious injury," there has been no Eighth Amendment violation. *Toguchi*, 391 F.3d at 1061.

Differences in judgment as to appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment between an inmate and prison medical providers—or, for that matter, between medical providers—are not enough to establish a deliberate indifference claim. *Sanchez v. Vild*, 891 F.2d 240, 242 (9th Cir. 1989). "[T]o prevail on a claim involving choices between alternative courses of treatment, a prisoner must show that the chosen course of treatment 'was medically unacceptable under the circumstances,' and was chosen 'in conscious disregard of an

excessive risk' to the prisoner's health." *Toguchi*, 391 F.3d at 1058 (alteration omitted) (quoting *Jackson v. McIntosh*, 90 F.3d 330, 332 (9th Cir. 1996)).

Stated another way, a plaintiff must plausibly allege that medical providers chose one treatment over the plaintiff's preferred treatment "even though they knew [the plaintiff's preferred treatment] to be medically necessary based on [the plaintiff's] records and prevailing medical standards." *Norsworthy v. Beard*, 87 F. Supp. 3d 1104, 1117 (N.D. Cal. 2015). Further, a business providing medical treatment to prisoners may use legitimate means to cut costs and maximize profits where it can—much like most insurance companies in the health care industry in the outside world—so long as minimum constitutional requirements are met. *See Zingg v. Groblewski*, 907 F.3d 630, 638 (1st Cir. 2018) (holding that there is no "per se Eighth Amendment prohibition against corrections officials considering cost, even when considered only in the course of selecting treatment that is aimed at attending to an incarcerated person's serious medical needs").

Non-medical prison personnel generally are entitled to rely on the opinions of medical professionals with respect to the medical treatment of an inmate. However, if "a reasonable person would likely determine [the medical treatment] to be inferior," the fact that an official is not medically trained will not shield that official from liability for deliberate indifference. *Snow*, 681 F.3d at 986 (internal quotation marks omitted); *see also McGee v. Adams*, 721 F.3d 474, 483 (7th Cir. 2013) (stating that non-medical personnel may rely on medical opinions of health care professionals unless "they have a reason to believe (or actual knowledge) that prison doctors or their assistants are mistreating (or not treating) a prisoner") (internal quotation marks omitted).

Plaintiff should keep these standards in mind if he files an amended complaint.

6. Standards for Amended Complaint

If Plaintiff chooses to amend the Complaint, Plaintiff must show that his claims are timely and must demonstrate how the actions complained of have resulted in a deprivation of Plaintiff's constitutional rights. *See Ellis v. Cassidy*, 625 F.2d 227, 229 (9th Cir. 1980), abrogated on other grounds by Kay v. Ehler, 499 U.S. 432 (1991). Plaintiff must allege a sufficient causal connection between each defendant's actions and the claimed deprivation. *Taylor*, 880 F.2d at 1045; *Johnson v. Duffy*, 588 F.2d 740, 743 (9th Cir. 1978). "Vague and conclusory allegations of official participation in civil rights violations are not sufficient to withstand a motion to dismiss" or to survive screening under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915 and 1915A. *Ivey v. Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Alaska*, 673 F.2d 266, 268 (9th Cir. 1982); *see also Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678 ("Nor does a complaint suffice if it tenders naked assertions devoid of further factual enhancement." (internal quotation marks and alteration omitted)).

Rather, for each cause of action against each defendant, Plaintiff must state the following: (1) the name of the person or entity that caused the alleged deprivation of Plaintiff's constitutional rights; (2) facts showing the defendant is a state actor (such as state employment or a state contract) or a private entity performing a state function; (3) the dates on which the conduct of the defendant allegedly took place; (4) the specific conduct or action Plaintiff alleges is unconstitutional; (5) the particular federal constitutional provision (or state law provision) Plaintiff alleges has been violated; (6) facts alleging that the elements of the violation are met; (7) the injury or damages Plaintiff personally suffered; and (8) the particular type of relief Plaintiff is seeking from each defendant. In

addition, Plaintiff must include facts showing that Plaintiff can meet the *Monell* requirements as explained above with respect to Defendant Corizon.

Further, any amended complaint must contain all of Plaintiff's allegations in a single pleading and cannot rely upon, attach, or incorporate by reference other pleadings or documents. Dist. Idaho Loc. Civ. R. 15.1 ("Any amendment to a pleading, whether filed as a matter of course or upon a motion to amend, must reproduce the entire pleading as amended. The proposed amended pleading must be submitted at the time of filing a motion to amend."); see also Forsyth v. Humana, Inc., 114 F.3d 1467, 1474 (9th Cir. 1997) ("[An] amended complaint supersedes the original, the latter being treated thereafter as non-existent."), overruled in part on other grounds by Lacey v. Maricopa County, 693 F.3d 896, (9th Cir. 2012) (en banc); Hal Roach Studios, Inc. v. Richard Feiner and Co., Inc., 896 F.2d 1542, 1546 (9th Cir. 1990) (holding that the district court erred by entering judgment against a party named in the initial complaint, but not in the amended complaint).

Plaintiff must set forth each different factual allegation in a separate numbered paragraph. The amended complaint must be legibly written or typed in its entirety, and it should be clearly designated as the "First Amended Complaint." Plaintiff's name and address should be clearly printed at the top left corner of the first page of each document filed with the Court.

If Plaintiff files an amended complaint, Plaintiff must also file a "Motion to Review the Amended Complaint." If Plaintiff does not amend within 28 days, or if the amendment does not comply with Rule 8, this case may be dismissed without further notice. *See Knapp v. Hogan*, 738 F.3d 1106, 1110 (9th Cir. 2013) ("When a litigant knowingly and repeatedly

refuses to conform his pleadings to the requirements of the Federal Rules, it is reasonable to conclude that the litigant simply *cannot* state a claim.").

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED:

- 1. Plaintiff has 28 days within which to file an amended complaint as described above. If Plaintiff does so, Plaintiff must file (along with the amended complaint) a Motion to Review the Amended Complaint. If Plaintiff does not amend within 28 days, this case may be dismissed without further notice.
- 2. Plaintiff's request for appointment of counsel (contained in the Complaint) is DENIED without prejudice. Plaintiff may renew the request for counsel in an amended complaint.

DATED: March 2, 2020

David C. Nye

Chief U.S. District Court Judge