

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

JONATHAN BRYANT,  
Plaintiff,  
v.  
HRYCI MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT,  
Defendant.

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: Civ. No. 16-613-RGA  
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Jonathan Bryant, Howard R. Young Correctional Institution, Wilmington, Delaware,  
Pro Se Plaintiff.

MEMORANDUM OPINION

  
**ANDREWS, U.S. District Judge:**

Plaintiff Jonathan Bryant, an inmate at the Howard R. Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington, Delaware, filed this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He appears *pro se* and has been granted leave to proceed *in forma pauperis*. (D.I. 4). The Court proceeds to review and screen the Complaint (D.I. 2) pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) and § 1915A(a).

### BACKGROUND

Plaintiff has been incarcerated for over eight years. He alleges that he has been administered forced medication during three different time frames: November 2012 through December 2012; March 2013 through February 2015; and June 2016 to the present. Plaintiff submitted a grievance. He alleges that, in January 2016, the mental health director made a determination that Plaintiff's mental health condition did not warrant taking the medication. Plaintiff alleges that he suffers from numerous side effects as a result of the medication. Plaintiff seeks compensatory damages and injunctive relief.

### SCREENING OF COMPLAINT

A federal court may properly dismiss an action *sua sponte* under the screening provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) and § 1915A(b) if "the action is frivolous or malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief." *Ball v. Famiglio*, 726 F.3d 448, 452 (3d Cir. 2013); see also 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) (*in forma pauperis* actions); 28 U.S.C. § 1915A (actions in which prisoner seeks redress from a governmental defendant); 42 U.S.C. § 1997e (prisoner actions brought with respect to prison conditions). The Court must accept all factual allegations in a complaint as true and

take them in the light most favorable to a *pro se* plaintiff. *Phillips v. County of Allegheny*, 515 F.3d 224, 229 (3d Cir. 2008); *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 93 (2007). Because Plaintiff proceeds *pro se*, his pleading is liberally construed and his complaint, “however inartfully pleaded, must be held to less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.” *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. at 94 (citations omitted).

An action is frivolous if it “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). Under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) and § 1915A(b)(1), a court may dismiss a complaint as frivolous if it is “based on an indisputably meritless legal theory” or a “clearly baseless” or “fantastic or delusional” factual scenario. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327-28; *Wilson v. Rackmill*, 878 F.2d 772, 774 (3d Cir. 1989).

The legal standard for dismissing a complaint for failure to state a claim pursuant to § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) and § 1915A(b)(1) is identical to the legal standard used when ruling on Rule 12(b)(6) motions. *Tourscher v. McCullough*, 184 F.3d 236, 240 (3d Cir. 1999). However, before dismissing a complaint or claims for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted pursuant to the screening provisions of 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915 and 1915A, the Court must grant Plaintiff leave to amend his complaint unless amendment would be inequitable or futile. See *Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 114 (3d Cir. 2002).

A well-pleaded complaint must contain more than mere labels and conclusions. See *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662 (2009); *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544 (2007). A plaintiff must plead facts sufficient to show that a claim has substantive

plausibility. See *Johnson v. City of Shelby*, \_\_\_U.S.\_\_\_, 135 S.Ct. 346, 347 (2014). A complaint may not be dismissed, however, for imperfect statements of the legal theory supporting the claim asserted. See *id.* at 346.

A court reviewing the sufficiency of a complaint must take three steps: (1) take note of the elements the plaintiff must plead to state a claim; (2) identify allegations that, because they are no more than conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth; and (3) when there are well-pleaded factual allegations, assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief. *Connelly v. Lane Constr. Corp.*, 809 F.3d 780,787 (3d Cir. 2016) (internal citations and quotations omitted). Elements are sufficiently alleged when the facts in the complaint “show” that the plaintiff is entitled to relief. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679 (quoting Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2)). Deciding whether a claim is plausible will be a “context-specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” *Id.*

The HRYCI Mental Health Department is the only named defendant. It falls under the umbrella of the Delaware Department of Correction, an agency of the State of Delaware. The Eleventh Amendment protects states and their agencies and departments from suit in federal court regardless of the kind of relief sought. *Pennhurst State School & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984). “Absent a state’s consent, the Eleventh Amendment bars a civil rights suit in federal court that names the state as a defendant.” *Laskaris v. Thornburgh*, 661 F.2d 23, 25 (3d Cir. 1981) (citing *Alabama v. Pugh*, 438 U.S. 781 (1978)). Delaware has not waived its immunity from suit in federal court; although Congress can abrogate a state’s sovereign immunity, it did not do so through the enactment of 42 U.S.C. § 1983. See *Brooks–McCollum v.*

*Delaware*, 213 F. App'x 92, 94 (3d Cir. 2007). In addition, dismissal is proper because the HRYCI Mental Health Department is not a person for purposes of § 1983. See *Will v. Michigan Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 71(1989); *Calhoun v. Young*, 288 F. App'x 47 (3d Cir. 2008).

Accordingly, the Court will dismiss the Complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(iii) and § 1915A(b)(2) as its sole defendant is immune from suit. However, since it appears plausible that Plaintiff may be able to articulate a claim against alternative defendants, he will be given an opportunity to amend his pleading. See *O'Dell v. United States Gov't*, 256 F. App'x 444 (3d Cir. 2007) (leave to amend is proper where the plaintiff's claims do not appear "patently meritless and beyond all hope of redemption").

#### CONCLUSION

For the above reasons, the Court will: (1) dismiss the Complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(iii) and § 1915A(b)(2); and (2) give Plaintiff leave to amend.

An appropriate order will be entered.

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**ORDER**

At Wilmington this 22 day of November, 2016, consistent with the  
Memorandum Opinion issued this date,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that:

1. The Complaint is **DISMISSED** as Defendant is immune from suit pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915(e)(2)(B)(iii) and 1915A(b)(2).
2. Plaintiff is given leave until on or before **DECEMBER 16, 2016**, to file an amended complaint naming proper defendants. The case will be closed should Plaintiff fail to timely file an amended complaint.

  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE