

**NONPRECEDENTIAL DISPOSITION**

To be cited only in accordance with FED. R. APP. P. 32.1

**United States Court of Appeals****For the Seventh Circuit****Chicago, Illinois 60604**

Submitted October 21, 2025\*

Decided October 22, 2025

**Before**CANDACE JACKSON-AKIWUMI, *Circuit Judge*JOSHUA P. KOLAR, *Circuit Judge*NANCY L. MALDONADO, *Circuit Judge*

No. 24-1963

RANDALL E. HARRIS, SR.,  
*Plaintiff-Appellant,**v.*DENISE BONNETT, et al.,  
*Defendants-Appellees.*Appeal from the United States District  
Court for the Eastern District of  
Wisconsin.

No. 22-cv-1220

Stephen C. Dries,  
*Magistrate Judge.***ORDER**

Randall Harris, a Wisconsin prisoner, filed this suit alleging violations of his rights under the Eighth Amendment. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1983. He appeals the summary judgment entered against him for failing to exhaust his administrative remedies.

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\* We have agreed to decide the case without oral argument because the briefs and record adequately present the facts and legal arguments, and oral argument would not significantly aid the court. FED. R. APP. P. 34(a)(2)(C).

See 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). Because Harris did not present evidence that rebuts the defendants' exhaustion defense, we affirm.

We construe the facts and draw all reasonable inferences in favor of Harris, the nonmoving party. *Williams v. Rajoli*, 44 F.4th 1041, 1045 (7th Cir. 2022). Harris alleged that because of a pre-existing mobility impairment involving his knee, his placement in the second tier of the prison housing unit at Dodge Correctional Institution put him at risk of injury because it required the use of stairs. According to Harris, prison officials refused to move him to a lower tier, despite his repeated requests. And though Dr. Denise Bonnett gave him a cane, she refused to order a first-tier housing restriction. As a result, Harris fell on the stairs on the way to his cell and suffered injuries. After the fall, prison officials moved Harris to the first tier, but he asserted that medical staff, including nurse Ann Miller, subsequently provided him with inadequate medical treatment for his injuries.

Harris filed only one prison complaint. In it, he said that he was being denied prescription medication to treat the injuries from his fall but did not say anything about the prison's refusal to move him before the fall. In response, he received a letter from a complaint examiner rejecting the complaint for failing to show that Harris had tried to resolve the issue informally before filing a formal complaint. The letter told Harris to contact the manager of the health services unit to attempt to resolve the issue and gave him ten days to resubmit the complaint confirming he had done so. Harris did not resubmit the complaint.

Harris then filed this lawsuit against Dr. Bonnett, Miller, and an officer who placed him on the second tier, alleging that their actions caused his injury, and that they failed to provide adequate medical treatment after his injury. The defendants moved for summary judgment on the ground that Harris failed to exhaust his administrative remedies. Apparently overlooking the complaint about prescription medication, the defendants asserted that Harris had never submitted a prison complaint. Harris responded by submitting the complaint examiner's rejection letter, although he did not tender a copy of the complaint itself. The court considered that rejection letter and concluded that it failed to show that Harris had exhausted his remedies because he offered no evidence that he contacted the manager of the health services unit, resubmitted his complaint, or appealed the rejection. The court also rejected Harris's argument that he could not exhaust his remedies because he did not know the names of the officers he sought assistance from before his injury.

Harris appeals, and we review de novo the grant of summary judgment based on a failure to exhaust. *Williams*, 44 F.4th at 1045. To properly exhaust administrative remedies under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, 42 U.S.C. § 1997e, a prisoner must complete every step of the prison's grievance process. *Woodford v. Ngo*, 548 U.S. 81, 89–93 (2006). When a prisoner is incarcerated in a state facility, state law governs the process. *Lanaghan v. Koch*, 902 F.3d 683, 687 (7th Cir. 2018). Wisconsin's grievance process requires Harris to attempt to resolve an issue prior to resorting to a formal complaint, to file a complaint within fourteen days of the issue giving rise to the complaint, and to resubmit the complaint within ten days if it is rejected for failing to meet certain criteria. WIS. ADMIN. CODE DOC §§ 310.07, 310.10(5). Wisconsin's administrative code also establishes an appeal process for rejected complaints. *Id.* § 310.09.

Harris argues that the defendants misled the district court about his grievance history when they asserted that Harris had never filed a complaint. And he attaches to his reply brief a copy of the complaint he filed related to his prescription medication. But even considering the complaint, we agree with the district court that Harris did not exhaust his remedies. The complaint examiner rejected Harris's complaint because he did not attempt to resolve the issue with the health services unit first. Harris neither appealed the rejection nor followed the complaint examiner's instructions to contact the health services unit and resubmit the complaint. Harris failed to comply with the prison grievance process, so he did not exhaust his administrative remedies.

Harris next reasserts that the grievance process was unavailable because he could not name the guards involved in his placement before his fall. But courts can only excuse the exhaustion requirement where there is no "available" administrative remedy, 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a), such as when the process is (1) "a simple dead end"; (2) so "opaque that it becomes, practically speaking, incapable of use"; or (3) thwarted by prison administrators through "machination, misrepresentation, or intimidation." *Ross v. Blake*, 578 U.S. 632, 643–44 (2016). While the grievance process required that Harris's complaint "contain sufficient information" to enable investigation and resolution, WIS. ADMIN. CODE DOC § 310.07(6), it did not require him to name the guards. *Jones v. Bock*, 549 U.S. 199, 217–18 (2007); *Jackson v. Esser*, 105 F.4th 948, 959–60 (7th Cir. 2024). Harris's belief that it would have been futile to file a complaint without naming the guards does not make the remedy unavailable. *See Williams*, 44 F.4th at 1045.

AFFIRMED