

CASE STUDY



Client Win in Prisoner Rights Case

SPRINGFIELD, MO OVERVIEW

A Husch Blackwell pro bono team helped a Missouri prisoner assert his right to be protected from attack by other inmates.

While a prisoner with the Missouri Department of Correction, Christopher Spates was viciously attacked in his cell by another inmate. At the time, Christopher's hands were cuffed behind his back, preventing him from defending himself.

The altercation shouldn't have been a surprise: Christopher and his attacker had had a fight earlier the same day, but correctional officers disregarded that information and placed them both in a cell together, with Christopher cuffed and the other man unrestrained.

Husch Blackwell's impact

Christopher brought a civil lawsuit *pro se* (without legal counsel) against the state in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri; however, he asked the court to appoint counsel for him. The court granted that request and appointed former HB lawyer Ginger Gooch to represent him. When Ginger left the firm after her appointment as an appellate court judge, Laura Robinson, Brent Dulle, and Abi Goodrich took over Christopher's representation.

The Husch Blackwell team conducted discovery, prepared for trial, and tried the case before a jury in Springfield, Missouri, arguing that the 8th Amendment guaranteed Christopher's

Legal Team

Brent Dulle

Laura C. Robinson

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right to be protected from attack by other inmates. The jury agreed, returning a verdict for the client for compensatory damages of \$85,000 and punitive damages totaling \$140,000.