

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

GOLDA P MCGRANN

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-02407-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OTTUMWA COMMUNITY SCHOOL DIST

Employer

OC: 08/15/10

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Section 96.4-5-a – Benefits During Successive Academic Terms

Section 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Golda P. McGrann (claimant) appealed a representative's February 4, 2011 decision (reference 04) that concluded she was not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits between academic terms based upon her wage credits earned with educational institutions such as Ottumwa Community School District (employer). Hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 1:00 p.m. on April 13, 2011. This appeal was consolidated for hearing with one related appeal, 11A-UI-02408-DT. The claimant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which she could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. The employer responded to the hearing notice and indicated that Dawn Thompson would participate as the employer's representative. When the administrative law judge contacted the employer for the hearing, Ms. Thompson agreed that the administrative law judge should make a determination based upon a review of the available information. Based on a review of the available information and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant's appeal timely or are there legal grounds under which it can be treated as timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant established an unemployment insurance benefit year effective August 15, 2010. Her weekly benefit amount was calculated to be \$376.00, based on her base period wage credits with three employers, including the employer. She reopened the claim by filing an additional claim effective December 19, 2010, and filed weekly claims seeking and receiving unemployment insurance benefits for the weeks ending December 25, 2010 and January 1, 2011.

On February 4, 2011, the representative's decision was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record, indicating that while the claimant was eligible for unemployment insurance

benefits earned from other employers, "you are currently laid off because you are between successive years or terms. You have reasonable assurance of employment next term. Therefore, benefits based on wages earned from all educational institutions . . . will be removed from your claim. . . . Your eligibility will be based on the remaining wages on your claim." No evidence was provided to rebut the presumption that the claimant received the decision within a short time thereafter. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by February 14, 2011. The appeal was not filed until it was hand-delivered to a local Agency office on February 28, 2011, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. The appeal was not filed until after an overpayment decision was issued on February 21, 2011 (reference 07) which implemented the disqualification decision to reduce the amount of eligibility to which the claimant was entitled for the two-week period ending January 1, 2011.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

If a party fails to make a timely appeal of a representative's decision and there is no legal excuse under which the appeal can be deemed to have been made timely, the decision as to the merits has become final and is not subject to further review. Iowa Code § 96.6-2 provides that unless the affected party (here, the claimant) files an appeal from the decision within ten calendar days, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied as set out by the decision.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev., 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); Johnson v. Board of Adjustment, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976). Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. Messina v. IDJS, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also In re Appeal of Elliott, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case then becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. Hendren v. IESC, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); Smith v. IESC, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

A party does not have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal if the delay is due to Agency error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service. 871 IAC 24.35(2). Failing to read and follow the instructions for filing an appeal is not a reason outside the appellant's control that deprived the appellant from having a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. The appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that the appellant's failure to file a timely appeal within the prescribed time was not due to a legally excusable reason so that it can be treated as timely. The administrative law judge further concludes that because the appeal was not timely,

the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal, regardless of whether the merits of the appeal would be valid. See Beardslee, supra; Franklin, supra; and Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company v. Employment Appeal Board, 465 N.W.2d 674 (Iowa App. 1990).

DECISION:

The representative's February 4, 2011 decision (reference 04) is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative has become final and remains in full force and effect. Benefits based on wage credits earned with educational institutions are denied for the two-week period ending January 1, 2011.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/kjw