

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

URSULA M HOLMES
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 15A-UCFE-00039-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

US POSTAL SERVICE
Employer

**OC: 10/18/15
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 – Voluntary Quit
Iowa Code § 96.3-7 – Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits
871 IA Admin. Code 24(10) – Employer Participation in Fact Finding

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated November 12, 2015, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on December 9, 2015. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Rick Smith and Louanne Butterfield.

ISSUES:

Whether claimant voluntarily quit for good cause attributable to employer?

Whether claimant was overpaid benefits?

If claimant was overpaid benefits, should claimant repay benefits or should employer be charged due to employer's participation or lack thereof in fact finding?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on October 23, 2015. Claimant voluntarily quit her employment on October 23, 2015 because claimant was not willing to work the different hours offered to her after she was unsuccessful in her attempt to complete window training for the USPS.

Claimant was employed as a postal support employee. She was hired part time and worked 32 to 40 hours a week on a schedule that was not set. As claimant was not a permanent employee, she was not guaranteed a schedule. Claimant had been working overnight hours which accommodated her school schedule. Claimant chose to pursue counter training. In order to pursue this, claimant was removed from the overnight hours she had been working. Claimant did her one week of training but was not successful in the initial counter training test. She was not able to continue with counter training. Claimant's previous position was no longer available. Claimant moved to another position that worked different hours than she'd worked initially. She worked these hours for approximately a month. Employer accommodated claimant's wishes for varied hours and Sunday mornings off for church. Claimant quit her job as the new hours and position she worked did not work well with her classes that she was taking.

Employer did not participate in fact finding. Claimant has received unemployment benefits in this matter in that she has received \$1956 a week for six weeks.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) and (8) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied

permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if unrebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists. The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment

insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)“b” as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant voluntarily quit her employment without good cause attributable to employer. Claimant knew that the position she was originally hired to work did not guarantee hours that she would be working. Although employer did ask claimant what shift she would like to work upon her initial interview, there was no agreement or guarantee that claimant would get or keep those hours as claimant was hired for a temp position.

When claimant chose to pursue a counter position she necessarily gave up her previous job to pursue the new job. Claimant's previous position was filled when claimant found out she'd been unsuccessful at counter testing. As claimant had no position to return to, employer put claimant in another position working different hours. As claimant had not been guaranteed hours or a position, employer did not bring about claimant's quit by having claimant work different hours in a different position. Claimant shall not receive unemployment benefits.

The overpayment issue was addressed. Claimant has received 6 weeks of benefits and \$326 per week for a total of \$1956. Said payments are overpayments.

The issue of employer participation was addressed. Employer did not participate in fact finding in this matter. As employer did not substantially participate, employer's account shall be responsible for overpayments received by claimant.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated November 12, 2015, reference 01, is reversed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible. Unemployment benefits received to date by claimant are deemed overpayments. Employer's account is to be charged for the overpayments, as employer did not substantially participate in fact finding in this matter.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

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