

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

PATRICIA M SHAMBLIN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 17A-UI-05828-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WINEGARD COMPANY
Employer

OC: 05/07/17
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated May 31, 2017, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on June 19, 2017. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Karry Hale. Employer's Exhibits 1-5 were admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct?

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 May 6, 2017. Employer discharged claimant on May 9, 2017 because claimant was not at work on May 8 or May 9, 2017 after being warned for absenteeism.

Claimant received multiple warnings for points accumulated under employer's absenteeism policy prior to claimant's last absences. Under employer's policy, an employee can only use casual hours to cover absences where an employee hasn't given employer at least one week's notice prior to taking vacation time off.

Claimant still had vacation time left at the time of her termination. She notified employer that she needed to give support to her mother as claimant's stepdaughter had recently died. Employer had already given claimant time off from work, but claimant needed additional time to care for a grieving family member.

Claimant explained this to her supervisor when she called in on May 8, 2017. Employer alerted claimant that she had no further casual time to allot to her absences and she didn't alert employer enough in advance to apply vacation hours for the days missed.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

In order to establish misconduct as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); *Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). The conduct must show a willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and

substantial disregard of the employer's interests or the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon supra*; *Henry supra*.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that one unexcused absence is not misconduct even when it followed nine other excused absences and was in violation of a direct order. *Sallis v. EAB*, 437 N.W.2d 895 (Iowa 1989). *Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984), held that the absences must be both excessive and unexcused.

In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning absenteeism. Claimant was warned concerning this policy, and claimant knew that she did not have the casual time to take off from work to further support other family members after she'd recently taken time off for matters surrounding the family member's funeral.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant knew that she was not properly following company procedures in taking time off to further care for sad family members. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated May 31, 2017, reference 01, is affirmed. 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.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/rvs