

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**NICOLE L BLACKBURN**  
Claimant

**WEST SIDE TRANSPORT INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 21A-UI-21725-S2-T**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 08/08/21**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

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Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quit

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant filed an appeal from the September 20, 2021, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon a finding that claimant was discharged due to conduct not in the best interest of her employer. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on November 19, 2021. Claimant Nicole L. Blackburn participated. Employer West Side Transport registered a witness name and telephone number to participate in the hearing, but the witness was not available when contacted for the hearing.

**ISSUE:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

As claimant was the only witness, the administrative law judge makes the following findings of fact based solely upon claimant's testimony: Claimant was employed full time as a break down coordinator from June 4, 2018, until August 12, 2021, when she was discharged.

On August 11, 2021, claimant asked her coworker to enter information into a computer program that claimant needed to perform her job. The coworker became upset with claimant because she believed she had already completed the task. Claimant did not yell or scream during this conversation but repeated her request to the coworker. On August 12, 2021, employer discharged claimant for the incident.

In May 2021, claimant received a disciplinary action for arguing with a coworker.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed.

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).

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

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and 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.

Further, 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 issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. Claimant testified her coworker yelled at her and claimant was discharged as a result. Employer did not present any evidence that claimant engaged in job-related misconduct. As a result, employer has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant engaged in misconduct that would disqualify her from benefits. Benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The September 20, 2021, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided she is otherwise eligible. Any benefits claimed and withheld on this basis shall be paid.



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Stephanie Adkisson  
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December 29, 2021  
Decision Dated and Mailed

sa/scn