

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

CHRISTINA M DYSON
Claimant

CASEYS MARKETING COMPANY
Employer

APPEAL 21A-UI-15139-S2-T
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 04/11/21
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quit
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Employer/Representative Participation Fact-finding Interview

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed an appeal from the June 22, 2021, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on August 26, 2021. Claimant Christina M. Dyson participated and testified. Employer Casey's Marketing Company participated through general manager Jim Huss. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?
Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?
Has the claimant been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits, and if so, can the repayment of those benefits to the agency be waived?
Is the claimant eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full-time as a store employee from September 10, 2019, and was separated from employment on or around November 20, 2020, when she was discharged.

In mid-April 2020, claimant went on a leave of absence at the request of her doctor. Claimant suffers from underlying health conditions which place her at higher risk if she contracts COVID-19. Claimant provided two doctor's notes to employer; one at the time her leave began, and the second one in early June 2020. The note did not provide an anticipated return-to-work date.

In October 2020, claimant contacted supervisor Jim Huss to discuss her return to work. He told her that her schedule would likely be different than it had been prior to her leave. Claimant called Huss again on November 5, 2020, to let him know her doctor released her return to work as of November 10, 2020. Claimant indicated she wanted to transfer to a different store and

Huss told her he would look into it. On or around November 20, 2020, claimant received an email from employer terminating her employment. She was not given a reason for her discharge.

Claimant received no disciplinary action during her employment.

The administrative record reflects that claimant received regular benefits during the prior claim year, effective April 12, 2020, as well as Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation ("FPUC") benefits. She has not received any regular state benefits or FPUC benefits since filing a second benefit year claim with an effective date of April 11, 2021. Employer did not participate in the fact finding interview.

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 section 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.

871 IAC 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 Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

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). The Iowa Court of Appeals found substantial evidence of misconduct in testimony that the claimant worked slower than he was capable of working and would temporarily and briefly improve following oral reprimands. *Sellers v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 531 N.W.2d 645 (Iowa Ct. App. 1995). Generally, continued refusal to follow reasonable instructions constitutes misconduct. *Gilliam v. Atlantic Bottling Co.*, 453 N.W.2d 230 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

The decision in this case rests, at least in part, on the credibility of the witnesses. It is the duty of the administrative law judge as the trier of fact in this case, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007). The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *Id.* In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other believable evidence; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *Id.*

After assessing the credibility of the witnesses who testified during the hearing, reviewing the exhibits submitted by the parties, considering the applicable factors listed above, and using her own common sense and experience, the administrative law judge finds the claimant's version of events to be more credible than the employer's recollection of those events. Employer's witness could not recall having any conversations with claimant and testified she was discharged for failing to remain in contact with employer. However, claimant was able to describe phone conversations she had with him, including dates of the conversations specific details about her return to work.

No evidence was presented that claimant received any warnings about her conduct or that she knew her job was in jeopardy. There is no evidence showing an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Employer has not met its burden of proving disqualifying job-related misconduct. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

The issues of overpayment and employer participation are moot.

DECISION:

The June 22, 2021, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided she is otherwise eligible. The issues of overpayment and employer participation are moot.



Stephanie Adkisson
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August 31, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

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