

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**JOAN C WRIGHT**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-03489-S2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

Employer

**OC: 02/26/12**

**Claimant: Respondent (2/R)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

Section 96.3-7 – Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The University of Iowa (employer) appealed a representative's April 3, 2012, decision (reference 01) that concluded Joan Wright (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for May 1, 2012. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Mary Eggenburg, Benefits Specialist, and Ray Haas, Human Resources Manager.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on August 1, 1978, as a full-time staff nurse. The claimant signed for receipt of the employer's handbook. The claimant understood she was supposed to report her absences at least one hour prior to the start of her shift. On February 4, 2011, the employer issued the claimant a written warning for four instances of tardiness. The claimant told the employer that her tardiness was due to depression, fatigue and hypothyroidism. She provided the employer with a doctor's note on February 17, 2011, indicating she was seeking treatment for her medical condition. On March 3, 2011, the claimant's physician wrote the employer a letter explained that the claimant's tardiness in December 2010, was due to her medical condition.

The claimant was tardy on October 28, 2011, for an unknown reason. On November 2, 2011, the claimant overslept and was tardy. On November 7, 2011, the claimant was socializing with a co-worker and was not at her desk at the start of her shift. On November 9, 2011, the claimant was tardy for an unknown reason. The employer issued the claimant a written warning on November 8, 2011, for repeated tardiness. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment.

On February 6, 2012, the claimant thought she had a doctor's appointment. When she arrived she realized she had the wrong date. She walked to her friend's business across the street from the physician. She used her friend's personal cell phone to call the employer. The claimant told the employer she was tardy because she had a flat tire and did not have a cell phone. The employer investigated and the claimant told the employer she had a physician's appointment on February 6, 2012. Then the claimant told the employer the truth about confusing the date of the appointment and not having a flat tire. The employer terminated the claimant for repeated tardiness and being untruthful about the reason for the tardiness.

## **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged for misconduct.

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(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. The term "absenteeism" also encompasses conduct that is more accurately referred to as "tardiness." An absence is an extended tardiness, and an incident of tardiness is a limited absence. Absences related to issues of personal responsibility such as transportation, lack of childcare, and oversleeping are not considered excused. Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984).

An employer is entitled to expect its employees to report to work as scheduled or to be notified when and why the employee is unable to report to work. The employer has established that the claimant was warned that further unexcused absences could result in termination of employment and the final absence was not excused. The final absence, in combination with the claimant's history of unexcused absenteeism, is considered excessive. Benefits are withheld.

Iowa Code section 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.

The claimant has received benefits since filing the claim herein. Pursuant to this decision, those benefits may now constitute an overpayment. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

**DECISION:**

The representative's April 3, 2012, decision (reference 01) is reversed. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because the claimant was discharged from work for misconduct. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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