

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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**ROBERT P MAJOR**  
Claimant

**CHARLES GABUS FORD INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 15A-UI-00576-LT**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 12/21/14**  
**Claimant: Respondent (1)**

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

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed an appeal from the January 8, 2015 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based upon a discharge from employment. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on March 3, 2015. Claimant participated. Employer participated through human resource director Dee Kading and was represented by Jackie Nolan of Employers Unity. Connie Connolly of Employers Unity offered testimony on the employer's fact-finding participation issue only.

**ISSUE:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full time as a service technician and was separated from employment on September 5, 2014 when he exhausted his 12 weeks' of leave time. His last day of work was June 3, 2014 when he was on Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave due to a stroke. He was released to return to work by Ryan Werling, D.O. on December 22, 2014 without restriction from returning to his regular occupation.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant did not quit but was discharged for no disqualifying reason.

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).

Where an employee did not voluntarily quit but was terminated while absent under medical care, the employee is allowed benefits and is not required to return to the employer and offer services pursuant to the subsection d exception of Iowa Code section 96.5(1). *Prairie Ridge Addiction Treatment Servs. v. Jackson and Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 810 N.W.2d 532 (Iowa Ct. App. 2012).

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). Absences due to properly reported illness cannot constitute work-connected misconduct since they are not volitional, even if the employer was fully within its rights to assess points or impose discipline up to or including discharge for the absence under its attendance policy. Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(7); *Cosper*, supra; *Gaborit v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 734 N.W.2d 554 (Iowa Ct. App. 2007).

The claimant is not required to return to the employer to offer services after the medical recovery because he has already been involuntarily terminated from the employment while under medical care. Although an employer is not obligated to provide light duty work for an employee whose illness or injury is non-work-related, the involuntary termination from employment while under medical care was a discharge from employment. In spite of the

expiration of the leave period, since claimant was still under medical care and had not yet been released to return to work without restriction as of the date of separation, no disqualifying reason for the separation has been established. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

**DECISION:**

The January 8, 2015 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. The claimant did not quit but was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided he is otherwise eligible.

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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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