

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

TRENA D TURNER
Claimant

**LUTHER CARE SERVICES
HOMES FOR THE AGING**
Employer

APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-10707-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 08/11/13
Claimant: Appellant (1)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Trena Turner filed a timely appeal from the September 13, 2013, reference 02, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on October 14, 2013. Claimant participated. Candy Plew represented the employer.

ISSUE:

Whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment that disqualifies the claimant for unemployment insurance benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Trena Turner was employed by Luther Care Services/Homes For the Aging as a part-time certified nursing assistant from May 21, 2013, until July 30, 2013, when the employer discharged her for uttering a threat to a coworker. The incident that prompted the discharge occurred on July 28, 2013, as Ms. Turner and a coworker were leaving the workplace at the end of the shift. Ms. Turner and the coworker engaged in a verbal dispute over whether Ms. Turner was taking appropriate care of her assigned residents. As Ms. Turner and the coworker were in the employer's parking lot, Ms. Turner told the coworker that she wanted to hit her. The coworker reported the incident to the employer.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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.

The employer has the burden of proof in this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

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. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

Threats of violence in the workplace constitute misconduct that disqualifies a claimant for benefits. The employer need not wait until the employee acts upon the threat. See Henecke v. Iowa Dept. Of Job Services, 533 N.W.2d 573 (Iowa App. 1995).

The evidence in the record establishes that Ms. Turner did indeed utter a threat of violence directed at the coworker. The threat constituted misconduct in connection with the employment.

Ms. Turner is disqualified for benefits until she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account shall not be charged for benefits.

DECISION:

The agency representative's September 13, 2013, reference 02, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged for misconduct. The claimant is disqualified for unemployment benefits until she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit allowance, provided she meets all other eligibility requirements. The employer's account shall not be charged.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

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