

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**ODESSA H PHAM**  
Claimant

**REM IOWA COMMUNITY SERVICES INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 21A-UI-16936-AD-T**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE**  
**DECISION**

**OC: 05/31/20**  
**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

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Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Filing – Timely Appeal

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

On August 2, 2021, Odessa Pham (claimant/appellant) filed an appeal from the August 19, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that disqualified claimant from benefits based on a finding claimant was discharged on May 5, 2020 for violation of a known company rule.

A telephone hearing was held on September 24, 2021. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. Claimant participated personally. John Regan, claimant's current employer, participated as a witness for claimant. REM Iowa Community Services Inc. (employer/respondent) participated by Program Director Kara Anderson.

Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

**ISSUE(S):**

- I. Is the appeal timely?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

The Unemployment Insurance Decision was mailed to claimant at the above address on August 19, 2020. That was claimant's correct address at that time. The decision states that it becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked or received by Iowa Workforce Development Appeals Section by August 29, 2020. However, if the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the appeal period is extended to the next working day.

Claimant did receive the decision denying benefits around August 19, 2020 but did not appeal at that time. She did not appeal because she thought the denial was prospective only and did not think it would result in an overpayment. The decision states in part that "it may result in an overpayment which you will be required to repay." Claimant did not call in to the Department to seek clarification.

Claimant received an overpayment decision on or about April 13, 2021. That decision found there was an overpayment for 11 weeks between May 31 and August 15, 2020. She did not appeal at that time either and instead opted to set up a payment plan.

Claimant did not appeal until she received a third decision on or about July 30, 2021, which found she was overpaid Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) in the amount of \$4,800.00.

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

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's appeal was untimely. The August 19, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that disqualified claimant from benefits based on a finding claimant was discharged on May 5, 2020 for violation of a known company rule is therefore final and remains in force.

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part: “[u]nless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision.”

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(1)(a) provides:

1. Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:
  - (a) If transmitted via the United States Postal Service on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark, or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark on the envelope in which it is received; or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion.
  - (b)
  - (c) If transmitted by any means other than [United States Postal Service or the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES)], on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

2. The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

There is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and the Administrative Law Judge has no authority to change the decision of representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). The ten-day period for appealing an initial determination concerning a claim for benefits has been described as jurisdictional. *Messina v. Iowa Dept. of Job Service*, 341 N.W.2d 52, 55 (Iowa 1983); *Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The only basis for changing the ten-day period would be where notice to the appealing party was constitutionally invalid. *E.g. Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979). The question in such cases becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 212

N.W.2d 471 (Iowa 1973). The question of whether the Claimant has been denied a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal is also informed by rule 871-24.35(2) which states that "the submission of any ...appeal...not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service."

Claimant received the decision in a timely manner. Claimant did not appeal due to confusion and failure to closely read the decision and/or seek clarification. She did not appeal later when it was determined she was overpaid benefits, either. She did not appeal until she received a second overpayment decision, nearly a year after the initial decision denying benefits. While the administrative law judge is sympathetic to claimant's situation, she had an opportunity to file a timely appeal but did not do so. She has not established a good cause reason for failing to timely appeal and the administrative law judge therefore concludes the appeal is not timely. Because the appeal is not timely, the decision has become final and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to change it.

**DECISION:**

The administrative law judge concludes the claimant's appeal was untimely. The August 19, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that disqualified claimant from benefits based on a finding claimant was discharged on May 5, 2020 for violation of a known company rule is therefore final and remains in force.



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Andrew B. Duffelmeyer  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax (515) 478-3528

September 30, 2021  
Decision Dated and Mailed

abd/ol

***Note to Claimant:***

If you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. If this decision denies benefits, you may be responsible for paying back benefits already received.

Individuals who are disqualified from or are otherwise ineligible for **regular** unemployment insurance benefits but who are unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.