

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**MILDRED DANDRIDGE**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-03566-S2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF THE  
HEARTLAND**  
Employer

**OC: 02/17/13  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Goodwill Industries of the Heartland (employer) appealed a representative's March 15, 2013 decision (reference 01) that concluded Mildred Dandridge (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 April 26, 2013. The claimant participated personally. The employer was represented by Toni Markiewicz, Hearings Representative, and participated by Kelle Aiken, Store 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 October 25, 2009, as a full-time production clerk. The claimant signed for receipt of the employer's handbook on October 25, 2009. The employer's handbook indicates that employees who accumulate seven attendance points will be terminated. The employer issued the claimant warnings on August 3, November 28, 2011, December 9, 26, 2012, and January 2, 2013, for attendance. As of January 2, 2013, the claimant had accumulated 6.5 attendance points. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment. During the claimant's last year of employment she properly reported absences due to illness five times. She was tardy twice and was absent once without notifying the employer. Five of the claimant's absences were of a personal nature.

On February 14, 2013, the claimant properly reported that she would not be at work. She reported her son fell on stairs and hit his back. The claimant fell and hit her head trying to catch him. The employer terminated the claimant on February 17, 2013, for absenteeism.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not 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(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.

871 IAC 24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer must establish not only misconduct but that there was a final incident of misconduct which precipitated the discharge. The last incident of absence was a properly reported illness which occurred on February 14, 2013. The claimant's absence does not amount to job misconduct because it was properly reported. The employer has failed to provide any evidence of willful and deliberate misconduct which would be a final incident leading to the discharge. The claimant was discharged but there was no misconduct.

**DECISION:**

The representative's March 15, 2013 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The employer has not met its proof to establish job-related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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