

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

KIMBERLY S MARVETS
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-05822-H2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

ABCM CORPORATION
Employer

OC: 04-22-12
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the May 9, 2012, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on June 12, 2012. The claimant did participate. The employer did participate through (representative) Tiffany Adams, Human Resources Coordinator and Michelle Moore, Program Coordinator.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged due to job connected misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a developmental aide part time beginning June 17, 2008 through April 23, 2012 when she was discharged. The claimant was discharged for a third unexcused absence in a 90-day period when on April 22, 2012 when she went home ill. The employer does not excuse absences for illness unless the company nurse determines that an employee is contagious and thus a threat to other employees or clients. The claimant was too ill with a migraine to continue working on April 22 so despite the fact that the nurse deemed her non-contagious; she was considered unexcused under the employer's policy.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

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 employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not considered misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness or injury cannot constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 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. IDJS*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa 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. IDJS*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988).

An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. An employee who is ill or injured is not able to perform their job at peak levels. A reported absence related to illness or injury is excused for the purpose of the Iowa Employment Security Act. An employer's point system or no-fault absenteeism policy is not dispositive of the issue of qualification for benefits. Because the final absence for which she was discharged was related to properly reported illness or injury, no final or current incident of unexcused absenteeism has been established and no disqualification is imposed.

DECISION:

The May 9, 2012 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Teresa K. Hillary
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

tkh/pjs