

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

JENNIFER M VOIGTS
Claimant

APPEAL 21A-UI-01823-DG-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
Employer

OC: 03/22/20
Claimant: Respondent (1R)

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work
Iowa Code § 96.19(38)b – Definitions – Total, partial unemployment
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(2)j – Benefit Eligibility Conditions – Leave of Absence
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) – Availability Disqualifications – Leave of Absence

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated December 15, 2020, (reference 01) that held claimant able to and available for work. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on February 24, 2021. Claimant participated. Employer participated by Rose Strickland, Book-Keeper, and was represented by Paul Jahnke, Hearing Representative. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant is able and available for work?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant was able to work and available to work beginning on March 22, 2020 after she was laid off work by employer because of a school closure mandate issued by Governor Reynolds.

Claimant began working for employer as a full-time classroom aide in March, 2001. On or about March 22, 2020 employer had to lay-off its employees because of a school closure mandate issued by Governor Reynolds. Employer complied with the mandate, and it did not have work available to claimant.

Claimant filed her weekly claims each week she was off work, and reported her wages. Employer contends that its account should not be charged because the school closure and lack of hours were mandated by the State of Iowa, and any loss of earnings was caused by the pandemic.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", unnumbered paragraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1)a provides:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(1) *Able to work.* An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

a. *Illness, injury or pregnancy.* Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(35) provides:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(35) Where the claimant is not able to work and is under the care of a medical practitioner and has not been released as being able to work.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) provides:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(10) The claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence, such period is deemed to be a period of voluntary unemployment and shall be considered ineligible for benefits for such period.

Iowa Code section 96.19(38) provides:

"Total and partial unemployment".

a. An individual shall be deemed *"totally unemployed"* in any week with respect to which no wages are payable to the individual and during which the individual performs no services.

b. An individual shall be deemed partially unemployed in any week in which either of the following apply:

(1) While employed at the individual's then regular job, the individual works less than the regular full-time week and in which the individual earns less than the individual's weekly benefit amount plus fifteen dollars.

(2) The individual, having been separated from the individual's regular job, earns at odd jobs less than the individual's weekly benefit amount plus fifteen dollars.

c. An individual shall be deemed temporarily unemployed if for a period, verified by the department, not to exceed four consecutive weeks, the individual is unemployed due to a plant shutdown, vacation, inventory, lack of work or emergency from the individual's regular job or trade in which the individual worked full-time and will again work full-time, if the individual's employment, although temporarily suspended, has not been terminated.

To be able to work, "[a]n individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood." *Sierra v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 508 N.W.2d 719, 721 (Iowa 1993); *Geiken v. Lutheran Home for the Aged*, 468 N.W.2d 223 (Iowa 1991); Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1). "An evaluation of an individual's ability to work for the purposes of determining that individual's eligibility for unemployment benefits must necessarily take into consideration the economic and legal forces at work in the general labor market in which the individual resides." *Sierra* at 723. This means that when evaluating whether a person with a protected disability is able and available to work we must take into account the reasonable accommodation requirements imposed on employers under federal, state, and local laws. *Id.*

Claimant has established her ability to work. Benefits are allowed. For whatever period the employer is not offering the same wages and hours as contemplated in the contract of hire, it may be liable for benefit charges to its account. Claimant must report her earnings each week she files a claim for benefits.

The employer contends that the reduction in hours was due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The chargeability issue and whether the employer's account may be charged for benefits paid to the claimant due to her reduction in hours worked because of the COVID 19 pandemic is remanded to the Tax Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and determination.

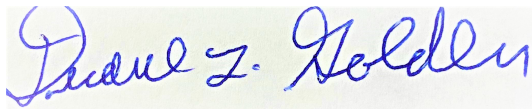
Note to Claimant: If this decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits and you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits, but who are currently 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 under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>. If this decision becomes final, or if you are not eligible for PUA, you may have an overpayment of benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated December 15, 2020, (reference 01) is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements. Claimant must report her earnings each week she files a claim for benefits.

REMAND:

The chargeability issue delineated in the findings of fact of whether the employer's account may be charged for benefits paid due to the COVID 19 pandemic is remanded to the Tax Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for a determination of allocation of charges.



Duane L. Golden
Administrative Law Judge

March 8, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

dlg/kmj