

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**LAISHLA L JERRIS**  
Claimant

**ADAMS PET HOSPITAL**  
Employer

**APPEAL 23A-UI-08448-DS-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 08/06/23  
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.26(19) – Voluntary Quit  
Iowa Code Section 96.3(7) – Overpayment of Benefits  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Employer/Representative Participation Fact-finding Interview

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

On September 5, 2023, the employer filed an appeal from the unemployment insurance decision dated August 29, 2023, (Reference 01) that allowed unemployment insurance benefits. Notice of hearing was mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 1:00 p.m. on September 20, 2023. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated through Gerald Adams, Owner. No exhibits were offered or admitted to the record. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

**ISSUE:**

Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment without good cause attributable to employer?  
Was the claimant overpaid benefits?  
Should the claimant repay benefits or should the employer be charged based upon participation in the fact-finding interview?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge finds that:

The claimant worked for Adams Pet Hospital from February of 2020 until July 19, 2023, when she quit the employment. The claimant was a Veterinary Assistant and reported to Practice Manager Betsy Smith.

On July 17, 2023, a client brought a dog in for treatment. This dog was particularly difficult to control, and the employer's staff was struggling to restrain the animal. Gerald Adams, the claimant and others worked together in a treatment room to get the dog restrained. At some point in this process, the owner of the dog joined them in the room and attempted to assist. The employer testified that animal owners occasionally join the staff in situations of this nature to assist with a difficult animal. The staff was still struggling to restrain the dog, so they moved to a larger room further back in the workplace with more space. The owner of the dog joined the staff again and the struggle continued. Eventually, it was determined that the animal could not be safely

restrained, and the staff ceased their attempts. The owner collected his animal and proceeded to the front of the workplace to check out and leave. At that point, the claimant walked up behind Dr. Adams and ran her fingers down his back without warning. She began to berate Dr. Adams regarding the client that had just left, claiming he had done that same action on her back. Dr. Adams wears hearing aids and struggles with hearing loss, and he only heard part of what the claimant was saying. The claimant proceeded to move about the workplace angrily, screaming at her co-workers and slamming doors. The claimant then went on her lunch break and left the workplace. After leaving the building, the claimant called the employer and advised that she would not be returning to finish her shift that day. The claimant was not scheduled to work the next day.

When the claimant returned to work on Wednesday, July 19, 2023, she worked the morning hours as normal. The claimant requested a meeting with management. A meeting was held around noon that day and included the claimant, Adams, his wife, and other managers. The claimant had note cards and prepared statements and used the meeting to voice a variety of grievances. Among these was the claimant's frustration that an unauthorized note that a co-worker had placed in a public place in the workplace had been removed by the employer. The employer had deemed the note to be inappropriate and the claimant disagreed. The claimant discussed the events of Monday, including her claim that she had been assaulted by the client. The employer advised the claimant that surveillance video had been reviewed and did not show anything of the sort. However, the employer further advised the claimant that a note had been added to the client's file calling for him to be assisted by only male employees in the future. The claimant felt that this was not enough and advised the employer that she had wanted the client to be "fired." The claimant further advised the employer that she was submitting her two-week notice of resignation immediately. The employer determined that given the claimant's inappropriate physical contact with Dr. Adams on Monday and the ongoing conflict the situation was causing, it was in the best interest of both parties that the claimant's resignation be effective immediately. The claimant did not contact law enforcement or file a police report regarding her allegations.

The claimant's job was not in jeopardy and continuing work was available had she not quit the employment.

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

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant voluntarily left the employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code section 96.5(1) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25(4) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits

in cases involving Iowa Code section 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10.

The claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code § 96.6(2). "Good cause" for leaving employment must be that which is reasonable to the average person, not the overly sensitive individual or the claimant in particular. *Uniweld Products v. Indus. Relations Comm'n*, 277 So.2d 827 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 1973). A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980).

It is the duty of the administrative law judge, as the trier of fact, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007).

The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *Id.* In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other evidence you believe; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *Id.*

The claimant has not met her burden to show good cause for the quit attributable to the employer. The alleged incident with the client occurred around the middle of the day on Monday, and the claimant immediately raged at her employer and left for the day. Dr. Adams was not even fully aware of the claimant's allegation, and instead learned that the claimant had an objection when she unexpectedly and inappropriately ran her fingers down his back. The claimant admits that she was yelling at her co-workers and slamming doors before she stormed out of the office. This cannot be reasonably considered to be a request for any specific action on the part of the employer or a fair opportunity for the employer to address the issue. While the claimant is entitled to her opinion regarding the appropriate action the employer might have taken, the claimant simply expressed her anger and left. It is worth noting that the claimant alleges an assault occurred but made no attempt to involve law enforcement or file any report. Further, the claimant testified that she found the contact offensive, but she then immediately performed the same action on the employer. The claimant skipped the rest of her workday and came to work on Wednesday prepared to quit the employment. The claimant has not shown a good cause reason for the quit. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code section 96.3(7)a, b, as amended in 2008, provides:

Payment – determination – duration – child support intercept.

#### 7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) (a) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. The employer shall not be relieved of charges if benefits are paid because the employer or an agent of the employer failed to respond timely or adequately to the department's request for information relating to the payment of benefits. This prohibition against relief of charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers.

(b) However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if un rebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871-subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and

information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists. The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)"b" as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which she was not entitled. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits.

The employer will not be charged for benefits if it is determined that they did participate in the fact-finding interview. Iowa Code § 96.3(7), Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10. In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. The administrative record reflects that claimant has received \$1,176.00 in regular unemployment benefits since filing her claim. The claimant is overpaid benefits but is not obligated to repay those benefits. The employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview and its account may be charged.

**DECISION:**

The August 29, 2023, (Reference 01) unemployment insurance decision allowing benefits is REVERSED. The claimant quit the employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as the claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible. The claimant is overpaid \$1,176.00 in benefits but is not obligated to repay those benefits. The employer's account may be charged.



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David J. Steen  
Administrative Law Judge

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September 28, 2023  
Decision Dated and Mailed

DS/jkb

**APPEAL RIGHTS.** If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor – Lucas Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Fax: (515)281-7191  
Online: [eab.iowa.gov](http://eab.iowa.gov)**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday. *There is no filing fee to file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board.*

**AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:**

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If you do not file an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at [www.iowacourts.gov/efile](http://www.iowacourts.gov/efile). *There may be a filing fee to file the petition in District Court.*

**Note to Parties:** YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

**Note to Claimant:** It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

**SERVICE INFORMATION:**

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

**DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN.** Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board  
4th Floor – Lucas Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Fax: (515)281-7191  
En línea: [eab.iowa.gov](http://eab.iowa.gov)**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal. *No hay tarifa de presentación para presentar una apelación ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo.*

**UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:**

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si no presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en una acción final de la agencia y tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en [www.iowacourts.gov/efile](http://www.iowacourts.gov/efile). *Puede haber una tarifa de presentación para presentar la petición en el Tribunal de Distrito.*

**Nota para las partes:** USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

**Nota para el reclamante:** es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

**SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:**

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.