

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

KATHLEEN J COYLE

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 08A-UI-03120-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

LABOR READY MIDWEST INC

Employer

**OC: 06/26/07 R: 02
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5-1-j – Temporary Employment
871 IAC 24.26(19) – Temporary Employment
Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge
Section 96.7-2-a(2) – Charges Against Employer's Account

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Labor Ready Midwest, Inc. (employer) appealed a representative's March 17, 2008 decision (reference 06) that concluded Kathleen J. Coyle (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on April 15, 2008. The claimant participated in the hearing. Rebecca Dripps appeared on the employer's behalf. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was there a disqualifying separation from employment either through a voluntary quit without good cause attributable to the employer or through a discharge for misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The employer is a temporary employment firm. The claimant began taking assignments with the employer on September 10, 2007. Her final assignment began and ended on February 7, 2008. She was to work as a general laborer at the employer's Coralville, Iowa business client. She only worked two hours on the assignment. The person with whom she had gotten a ride to the work site had decided to leave due to inclement weather. The claimant advised the business client that she needed to leave with her ride, and the business client responded that this was okay. However, on the work ticket the business client completed and gave to the claimant to return to the employer the business client indicated that the claimant was not to return to the work site. The claimant took the work ticket back to the employer's Cedar Rapids, Iowa office on the same day, February 7 and sought other work that day in Cedar Rapids, but no other work was available. She also sought reassignment with the employer on February 8, but no work was available. She did not maintain regular contact after that date.

The claimant established an unemployment insurance benefit year effective June 26, 2007. She filed an additional claim effective February 10, 2008.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The essential question in this case is whether there was a disqualifying separation from employment. The first subissue in this case is whether the employer or the business client ended the claimant's assignment and effectively discharged her for reasons establishing work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. The issue is not whether the employer or client was right or even had any other choice but to terminate the claimant's employment, 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 is misconduct that warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate questions. Pierce v. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

The focus of the definition of misconduct is on acts or omissions by a claimant that "rise to the level of being deliberate, intentional or culpable." Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa App. 1986). The acts must show:

1. Willful and wanton disregard of an employer's interest, such as found in:
 - a. Deliberate violation of standards of behavior that the employer has the right to expect of its employees, or
 - b. Deliberate disregard of standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect of its employees; or
2. Carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to:
 - a. Manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design; or
 - b. Show an intentional and substantial disregard of:
 1. The employer's interest, or
 2. The employee's duties and obligations to the employer.

Iowa Code § 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(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 reason the employer was forced to discharge the claimant from her assignment was her need to leave the work site early on February 7. In order to be misconduct, absenteeism must be both excessive and unexcused. The record does not establish that the claimant's absences were both excessive and unexcused. The employer has failed to meet its burden to establish misconduct. Cosper, supra. The claimant's absences do not establish her actions were misconduct within the meaning of the statute, and the claimant is not disqualified from benefits.

The second subissue in this case is whether the claimant voluntarily quit by failing to continually pursue reassignment.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1-j provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

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, but the individual shall not be disqualified if the department finds that:

j. The individual is a temporary employee of a temporary employment firm who notifies the temporary employment firm of completion of an employment assignment and who seeks reassignment. Failure of the individual to notify the temporary employment firm of completion of an employment assignment within three working days of the completion of each employment assignment under a contract of hire shall be deemed a voluntary quit unless the individual was not advised in writing of the duty to notify the temporary

employment firm upon completion of an employment assignment or the individual had good cause for not contacting the temporary employment firm within three working days and notified the firm at the first reasonable opportunity thereafter.

To show that the employee was advised in writing of the notification requirement of this paragraph, the temporary employment firm shall advise the temporary employee by requiring the temporary employee, at the time of employment with the temporary employment firm, to read and sign a document that provides a clear and concise explanation of the notification requirement and the consequences of a failure to notify. The document shall be separate from any contract of employment and a copy of the signed document shall be provided to the temporary employee.

871 IAC 24.26(19) provides:

Voluntary quit with good cause attributable to the employer and separations not considered to be voluntary quits. The following are reasons for a claimant leaving employment with good cause attributable to the employer:

(19) The claimant was employed on a temporary basis for assignment to spot jobs or casual labor work and fulfilled the contract of hire when each of the jobs was completed. An election not to report for a new assignment to work shall not be construed as a voluntary leaving of employment. The issue of a refusal of an offer of suitable work shall be adjudicated when an offer of work is made by the former employer. The provisions of Iowa Code § 96.5(3) and rule 24.24(96) are controlling in the determination of suitability of work. However, this subrule shall not apply to substitute school employees who are subject to the provisions of Iowa Code § 96.4(5) which denies benefits that are based on service in an educational institution when the individual declines or refuses to accept a new contract or reasonable assurance of continued employment status. Under this circumstance, the substitute school employee shall be considered to have voluntarily quit employment.

The intent of the statute is to avoid situations where a temporary assignment has ended and the claimant is unemployed, but the employer is unaware that the claimant is not working and could have been offered an available new assignment to avoid any liability for unemployment insurance benefits. Here the temporary employment assignment ended and the employer was notified by the claimant that the assignment ended and the claimant was available for a new assignment. She did seek reassignment immediately after the ending of the assignment, but no work was available. The statute or rule do not require that a claimant repeatedly make themselves available for reassignment with the temporary employment firm after initially having done so in order to maintain their eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits. Benefits are allowed, if the claimant is otherwise eligible.

The final issue is whether the employer's account is subject to charge. An employer's account is only chargeable if the employer is a base period employer. Iowa Code § 96.7. The base period is "the period beginning with the first day of the five completed calendar quarters immediately preceding the first day of an individual's benefit year and ending with the last day of the next to the last completed calendar quarter immediately preceding the date on which the individual filed a valid claim." Iowa Code § 96.19-3. The claimant's base period began January 1, 2006 and ended December 31, 2006. The employer did not employ the claimant during this time, and therefore the employer is not currently a base period employer and its account is not currently chargeable for benefits paid to the claimant.

DECISION:

The representative's March 17, 2008 decision (reference 06) is affirmed. The claimant did not voluntarily quit and the employer did discharge the claimant but not for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits, if she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account is not subject to charge in the current benefit year.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/pjs