

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**SHANE M SIEGLE**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 08A-UI-10368-LT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**QWEST CORPORATION**

Employer

**OC: 09/14/08 R: 02  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the October 29, 2008, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on November 20, 2008. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Ann Rodriguez and was represented by Frankie Patterson of Barnett Associates Inc.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether claimant was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was hired as a full-time coach and worked from June 5, 2001 until September 16, 2008 when he was discharged. In 2007 claimant supervised Brenda Milligan, who was discharged and filed a grievance that went to arbitration. As early as March or April 2008 employer had claimant pull his supervisory and counseling reports for Milligan and discovered that those reports included inaccurate dates indicating discussions with Milligan and seven other employees that allegedly occurred on weekends or holidays when the office was not open. Employer also questioned whether the discussions reported ever took place. Claimant attributed it to mistakes or late documentation. Ultimately employer settled the arbitration with Milligan in mid-September, in part because of the lack of foundation and authenticity of the documents. Employer confronted claimant about the inaccuracies when he was fired.

**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 § 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. *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). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Employment Appeal Board*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa App. 1988).

In an at-will employment environment 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. Employer knew of the issues as early as March or April 2008 and has not provided a good cause reason for the delay in discharging or confronting claimant and has not established a current or final act of misconduct, and, without such, the history of other incidents need not be examined. Accordingly, benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The October 29, 2008, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no current disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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