

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

RAHEEM HARRISON
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 11A-UI-08950-BT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

APAC CUSTOMER SERVICES OF IOWA
Employer

OC: 06/05/11
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)(a) - Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Raheem Harrison (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated July 5, 2011, reference 01, which held that he was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from Apac Customer Services, Inc. (employer) for work-related misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on August 1, 2011. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Rochelle Jordan, Human Resources Generalist. 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:

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

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was employed as a full-time customer service representative from February 9, 2009 through June 9, 2011. He was discharged for a policy violation after he was caught sleeping on the job on June 7, 2011. The employer has zero tolerance for sleeping on the job. Both the claimant's team leader and a floor walker witnessed him sleeping; the team leader snapped his fingers in front of the claimant and he did not respond. The human resources manager spoke with the claimant and he admitted he fell asleep, although he denied it during the hearing. The claimant had one previous disciplinary action for using his cell phone on the call floor.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. 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.

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.

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).

The claimant was discharged on June 9, 2011 for sleeping on the job. Misconduct must be substantial in nature to support a disqualification from unemployment benefits. Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1982). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. Id. While the claimant violated company policy, there is no evidence of a wrongful intent. Work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has not been established in this case and benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated July 5, 2011, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Susan D. Ackerman
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/css