

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**KEVIN J MCCAULEY**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 10A-UI-12699-JTT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**WAL-MART STORES INC**  
Employer

**OC: 08/08/10**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2-R)**

Iowa Code Section 96.5(2)(a) – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the September 3, 2010, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on October 29, 2010. Claimant participated. Marcel Bagnanga represented the employer and presented additional testimony through Linda Rhatigen.

**ISSUE:**

Whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment that disqualifies the claimant for unemployment insurance benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Kevin McCauley was employed by Wal-Mart as a full-time stockman from May 2009 until August 12, 2009, when the employer discharged him from the employment for making threats against his own person at a time when he was suffering a severe depressive episode. Claimant has been diagnosed with bipolar disorder and takes multiple prescription medications to address that condition. The claimant was in crisis at the time he threatened to harm himself and asked a coworker to give him a box cutter so that he could cut his own throat. The employer took the claimant's threat to harm himself very seriously and, in addition to discharging him from the employment, took the claimant to the emergency room for evaluation and treatment.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

Iowa Code section 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 this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

The weight of the evidence in the record fails to establish misconduct in connection with the employment. The weight of the evidence indicates that the claimant was suffering from serious mental illness at the time of the final incident that triggered the discharge. Claimant's conduct could not be considered fully volitional. The claimant was not acting with willful or wanton disregard for the employer's interest, but was instead acting out the mental illness. The

claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged.

The evidence calls and questions whether the claimant is able to work and available for work. This matter will be remanded to the Claims Division for investigation of the determination of those issues.

**DECISION:**

The Agency representative's September 3, 2010, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged.

This matter is remanded to the Claims Division for investigation of and determination of whether the claimant has been able to work and available for work since he established his claim for benefits.

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James E. Timberland  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/pjs