

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

**JENNIFER M WHITHAUS**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 20A-UI-07712-B2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CASEY'S MARKETING COMPANY**

Employer

**OC: 04/19/20**

**Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

Iowa Code § 96.3-7 – Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits

Federal Law PL 116-136 Sec. 2104 – Eligibility for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation

871 IA Admin. Code 24(10) – Employer Participation in Fact Finding

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated July 1, 2020, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on August 13, 2020. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Kimberly Ramaekers. Employer's Exhibit 1 was admitted into evidence.

**ISSUES:**

Whether claimant was discharged for misconduct?

Whether claimant was overpaid benefits?

Whether claimant is eligible for FPUC benefits?

If claimant was overpaid benefits, should claimant repay benefits or should employer be charged due to employer's participation or lack thereof in fact finding?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on April 27, 2020. Employer discharged claimant on April 27, 2020 because claimant was found to have been playing lottery while working and did not pay for over a thousand dollars of play that she'd done.

Claimant was an assistant manager of a Casey's. At the time of hire, she received access to an employee handbook. Claimant admitted that she never read the handbook. The handbook contained a statement that employees are not allowed to play the lottery while on the clock. Additionally, the handbook stated that theft of property of Casey's by an employee is grounds for immediate termination.

On April 17, 2020 claimant admitted to playing the instant lottery for herself many times while on the clock. Claimant stated that she would play the \$20 instant game and would put the winning tickets back into the machine to keep playing. By the end of claimant's shift, she had amassed \$1,060.00 in money owed to the lottery. Claimant did not pay this money on the date incurred. Claimant did not pay the money owed over the next nine days.

Employer was contacted by the lottery of an imbalance in the account from where claimant worked. Employer watched video showing claimant playing the instant game repeatedly. Employer confronted claimant with this information, and claimant admitted to playing while on the clock, and further admitted to not paying the \$1,060.00 owed. Claimant was terminated for these actions.

Claimant has received state unemployment benefits of \$2,921.00.

Claimant has received Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits of \$7,800.00.

Iowa Workforce Development fact finders did not conduct fact finding interviews in this matter.

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

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

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

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 disqualification shall continue 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

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

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.

PL116-136, Sec. 2104 provides, in pertinent part:

(b) Provisions of Agreement

(1) Federal pandemic unemployment compensation.--Any agreement under this section shall provide that the State agency of the State will make payments of regular compensation to individuals in amounts and to the extent that they would be determined if the State law of the State were applied, with respect to any week for which the individual is (disregarding this section) otherwise entitled under the State law to receive regular compensation, as if such State law had been modified in a manner such that the amount of regular compensation (including dependents' allowances) payable for any week shall be equal to

(A) the amount determined under the State law (before the application of this paragraph), plus

(B) an additional amount of \$600 (in this section referred to as "Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation").

....

(f) Fraud and Overpayments

(2) Repayment.--In the case of individuals who have received amounts of Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation to which they were not entitled, the State shall require such individuals to repay the amounts of such Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation to the State agency...

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.

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. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning theft of product and playing lottery while working. The gravity of both of claimant's actions was extreme. In order to accrue \$1,060.00 in money owed in one shift, claimant had to play the \$20.00 instant game at least 53 times while she was working. As claimant explained, she may have played the game many more times as she admitted she kept feeding the winning tickets back into the machine to be able to extend her playing.

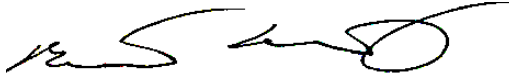
The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct both in terms of scope of the actions and amount claimant misappropriated from the store. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

The overpayment issue was addressed. Claimant has received state unemployment benefits of \$2,921.00. Claimant has received Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits of \$7,800.00. Both the state and the federal benefits received are overpayments.

The issue of employer participation was addressed. There is no information that a fact finding was conducted in this matter. Employer cannot be faulted for not participating in a fact finding that was not held. Employer's account will not be charged for overpayments received by claimant.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated July 1, 2020, reference 01, is reversed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.



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Blair A. Bennett  
Administrative Law Judge

August 20, 2020  
Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn