

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**MELISSA ONEAL**  
Claimant

**EARLY OUT SERVICES INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 20A-UI-03377-S1-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 03/01/20**  
**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) - Timeliness of Appeal  
Iowa Code § 96.5-1 - Voluntary Quit

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Melissa O'Neal (claimant) appealed a representative's March 18, 2020, decision (reference 03) that concluded ineligibility to receive unemployment insurance benefits due to voluntarily quitting with the Early Out Services (employer). After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on May 14, 2020. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Amanda Ruffatto, Director of Employee Services; Sheila Johnson, Insurance Manager; and Deemma Fitzgerald, Insurance Supervisor. 20A-UI-03376.S1-T and 20A-UI-03377.S1-T were heard at the same time.

Exhibit D-1 was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative file.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the appeal was filed in a timely manner.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: A disqualification decision was mailed to the appellant/claimant last known address of record on March 18, 2020. The decision was received by the appellant/claimant within ten days. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by March 30, 2020.

The claimant disagreed with the decision but decided not to appeal because she had other employment prospects. When she did decide to file an appeal, she noticed she could file her appeal online, by mail, or by fax. The claimant decided to file online. When the claimant had difficulty filing on line, she did not choose a different method because she did not want to leave her home. The claimant did not order stamps online so she could mail the appeal. The claimant did not investigate ways to take pictures of her appeal so she could fax/scan them to the department from her home. The appeal was not filed online until April 22, 2020, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

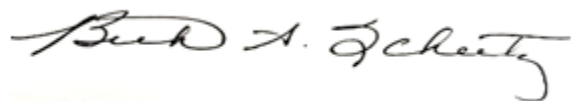
The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979). Benefits are denied.

*Note to Claimant:* This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits. If you disagree with this decision you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits due to disqualifying separations, but who are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.

**DECISION:**

The March 18, 2020 (reference 03) decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.



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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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May 19, 2020  
Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/mh