

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**APRIL M MASCHINO**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 17A-UI-13465-JE-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CASEYS MARKETING COMPANY**

Employer

**OC: 12/03/17**

**Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct

Section 96.3-7 – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the December 20, 2017, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on January 22, 2018. The claimant did not respond to the hearing notice and did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. Cathy Harper, Store Manager and Alicia Weber, Unemployment Insurance Consultant, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

**ISSUE:**

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

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a part-time kitchen employee for Casey's from May 19, 2017 to November 28, 2017. She was discharged for failing to return from a medical absence.

The claimant had surgery November 8, 2017. She provided the employer with a doctor's note stating she could return to work November 20, 2017, but told the employer she was experiencing complications and was going back to the doctor and would let the employer know if she was placed on any restrictions. On November 20, 2017, the claimant stopped by the store before her doctor appointment and told the employer she would notify it what the doctor said. The claimant did not contact the employer after her appointment and the employer called her several times and left voice mail messages asking her status but the claimant never responded. On November 27, 2017, the employer called and left the claimant another voice mail message asking what was going on but the claimant did not reply. The employer called human resources to ask if the claimant was on FMLA but was told she was not and the employer called the claimant and left one final message asking her to contact it. When the employer did not hear from the claimant by November 28, 2017, it terminated her employment.

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$380.00 for the four weeks ending December 30, 2017.

The employer personally participated in the fact-finding interview through the statements of Unemployment Insurance Consultant Alicia Weber. The employer also submitted written documentation prior to the fact-finding interview.

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

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for disqualifying job misconduct.

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).

The employer has the burden of proving disqualifying misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged him for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a. Misconduct that disqualifies an individual from receiving unemployment insurance benefits occurs when there are deliberate acts or omissions

that constitute a material breach of the worker's duties and obligations to the employer. See 871 IAC 24.32(1).

The claimant was off work and provided a doctor's excuse from November 8 through November 17, 2017. She told the employer she was returning to the doctor November 20, 2017, but then failed to contact the employer again prior to November 28, 2017, despite the fact the employer called her repeatedly and left voice mail messages inquiring as to the claimant's work status. Even though the claimant was originally off work due to a medical situation she still has a responsibility to keep the employer informed and provide any medical notes she receives in a timely manner. In this case, the employer did not know why the claimant was gone after November 20, 2017, or when or if she was going to return to work. The claimant's failure to maintain contact with the employer or respond to its voice mail messages constitutes disqualifying job misconduct.

Under these circumstances, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's conduct demonstrated a willful disregard of the standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect of employees and shows an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests and the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. The employer has met its burden of proving disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. IDJS*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). Therefore, benefits are denied.

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 unrebutted 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.

The unemployment insurance law requires benefits be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later denied benefits even if the claimant acted in good faith and was not at fault. However, a claimant will not have to repay an overpayment when an initial decision to award benefits on an employment separation issue is reversed on appeal if two conditions are met: (1) the claimant did not receive the benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, and (2) the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding that awarded benefits. In addition, if a claimant is not required to repay an overpayment because the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding, the employer's account will be charged for the overpaid benefits. Iowa Code section 96.3(7)a, b.

The claimant received benefits but has been denied benefits as a result of this decision. The claimant, therefore, was overpaid benefits.

Because the employer participated in the fact-finding interview, the claimant is required to repay the overpayment and the employer will not be charged for benefits paid.

In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. While there is no evidence the claimant received benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, the employer participated in the fact-finding interview personally through the statements of Talx Unemployment Insurance Consultant Alicia Weber. Consequently, the claimant's overpayment of benefits cannot be waived and she is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$380.00 for the four weeks ending December 30, 2017.

#### **DECISION:**

The December 20, 2017, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible. The claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for

those benefits. The employer personally participated in the fact-finding interview within the meaning of the law. Therefore, the claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$380.00 for the four weeks ending December 30, 2017.

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Julie Elder  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

je/scn