

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JOLIE L KALALA
Claimant

APPEAL 21A-UI-01884-DB-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WHIRLPOOL CORPORATION
Employer

OC: 10/11/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Able to and Available for Work
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) – Leave of Absence from Work

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the December 15, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that found claimant was eligible for unemployment benefits effective October 11, 2020 due to her not being able to and available for work. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on February 25, 2021. The claimant participated personally. Language Link provided language interpretation services. Patrick Kalala Tshimanga and Helelia Mulenda Wa Kalala participated as witnesses for the claimant. The employer, Whirlpool Corporation, did not participate. The administrative law judge took administrative notice of the claimant's unemployment insurance benefits records.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant able to and available for work?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant is employed full-time for this employer as an assembler. From approximately October 11, 2020 through October 24, 2020, the claimant was off work as she was suffering from COVID 19 like symptoms. This included a fever and cough. Claimant went back to work for a few days at the end of October of 2020 and then learned that her daughter had contracted COVID 19. Claimant was off work quarantining and caring for her daughter while she was ill. Claimant returned to work after her daughter recovered from COVID 19. Claimant's administrative records establish that she has been approved for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes as follows:

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in § 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", subparagraph 1, or temporarily unemployed as defined in § 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of § 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under § 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1) provides:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(1) Able to work. An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

a. Illness, injury or pregnancy. Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

b. Interpretation of ability to work. The law provides that an individual must be able to work to be eligible for benefits. This means that the individual must be physically able to work, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but able to work in some reasonably suitable, comparable, gainful, full-time endeavor, other than self-employment, which is generally available in the labor market in which the individual resides.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(2) provides:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(2) Available for work. The availability requirement is satisfied when an individual is willing, able, and ready to accept suitable work which the individual does not have good cause to refuse, that is, the individual is genuinely attached to the labor market. Since, under unemployment insurance laws, it is the availability of an individual that is required to be tested, the labor market must be described in terms of the individual. A labor market for an individual means a market for the type of service which the individual offers in the geographical area in which the individual offers the service. Market in that sense does not mean that job vacancies must exist; the purpose of unemployment insurance is to compensate for lack of job vacancies. It means only that the type of

services which an individual is offering is generally performed in the geographical area in which the individual is offering the services.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(1) provides:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(1) An individual who is ill and presently not able to perform work due to illness.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) provides:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(10) The claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence, such period is deemed to be a period of voluntary unemployment and shall be considered ineligible for benefits for such period.

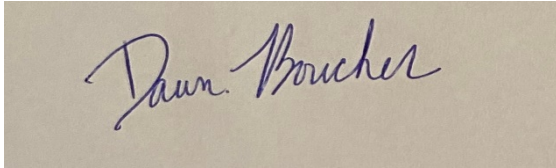
To be able to work, "[a]n individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood." *Sierra v. Employment Appeal Board*, 508 N.W.2d 719, 721 (Iowa 1993); *Geiken v. Lutheran Home for the Aged*, 468 N.W.2d 223 (Iowa 1991); Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1). "An evaluation of an individual's ability to work for the purposes of determining that individual's eligibility for unemployment benefits must necessarily take into consideration the economic and legal forces at work in the general labor market in which the individual resides." *Sierra* at 723.

The court in *Gilmore v. Empl. Appeal Bd.*, 695 N.W.2d 44 (Iowa Ct. App. 2004) noted that "[i]nsofar as the Employment Security Law is not designed to provide health and disability insurance, only those employees who experience illness-induced separations that can fairly be attributed to the employer are properly eligible for unemployment benefits." *White v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 487 N.W.2d 342, 345 (Iowa 1992) (citing *Butts v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 328 N.W.2d 515, 517 (Iowa 1983)). The burden is on the claimant to establish that she is able to work and available for work within the meaning of the statute. Iowa Code § 96.6(2); Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22.

Because the claimant was ill with COVID 19 like symptoms herself and then was caring for her daughter while she was ill with COVID 19, the claimant was not able to and available for work pursuant to Iowa law. As such, regular unemployment insurance benefits funded by the State of Iowa are denied effective October 11, 2020.

DECISION:

The December 15, 2020 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The claimant was not able to work or available for work effective October 11, 2020. Unemployment insurance benefits funded by the State of Iowa are denied effective October 11, 2020.



Dawn Boucher
Administrative Law Judge

March 4, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

db/kmj

Note to Claimant

- This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits funded by the State of Iowa under state law. 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.
- If you have applied and have been approved for PUA benefits, this decision will **not** negatively affect your entitlement to PUA benefits.