**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**
**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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| **PAIGE RONEY**<br>Claimant<br><br>**CASEYS MARKETING COMPANY**<br>Employer | **APPEAL 21A-UI-17467-SN-T**<br><br>**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE DECISION**<br><br>**OC: 05/16/21**<br>**Claimant: Appellant (6)** |

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work
Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

On August 8, 2021, Paige Roney (claimant/appellant) filed an appeal from the August 2, 2021, reference 01, unemployment insurance decision that concluded she was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for a telephone hearing scheduled for September 30, 2021, at 8:00 a.m. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which the appellant could be reached for the scheduled hearing and no hearing was held.

**ISSUE:**

Should the appeal be dismissed based on the appellant's failure to appear and participate?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing for this appeal. The appellant did not provide a telephone number for the scheduled hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. Official notice of the Clear2there hearing control screen is taken to establish that appellant did not call or register online with the Appeals Bureau to provide a telephone number and/or name of a representative.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties of the date and time of the hearing. It also states:

> **IMPORTANT NOTICE!**
> YOU MUST PROVIDE YOUR PHONE NUMBER TO THE APPEALS BUREAU AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. If you do not follow these instructions, the judge will not call you for the hearing. You must also provide the name(s) and phone number(s) of any witnesses to the Appeals Bureau.

The back page of the hearing notice provides further instruction and warning:

> If you do not participate in the hearing, the judge may dismiss the appeal or issue a decision without considering your evidence. The Appeals Bureau does not have a phone number for this hearing unless you provide it to us by following the instructions on the other side of this page. If you do not follow those instructions, the judge will not call you for the hearing. 871 IAC 26.14(7)

The information quoted above also appears on the hearing notice in Spanish.

As a courtesy to the appellant the record was left open for a minimum of 15 minutes after the hearing start time to give the appellant a reasonable opportunity to participate. This reasonable amount of time is appropriate because if a hearing were conducted with the non-appealing party alone it would have likely concluded in 15 minutes or less. Allowing additional time would prejudice the non-appealing party for appearing in a timely manner.

The unemployment insurance decision stated that the claimant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

> If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. … If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7) provides:

> If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provide in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request in writing to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.
>
> a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party.

c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to the parties. The appellant is responsible for going forward with the case in a prompt and thoughtful manner. The appellant must be present at the start of the hearing to avoid a default judgement. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7). The hearing notice instructs the parties to:

1. Read the hearing notice.
2. Register a telephone number where the party can be reached for the hearing.
3. Be available at that number at the date and time of the hearing.

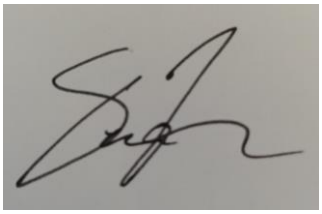
If these instructions are not followed, the appealing party must show it intended to proceed with the appeal and took steps to do so, but failed to appear because of some misunderstanding, accident, mistake or excusable neglect. The Iowa Supreme Court has held a default decision should be upheld when the absence of the appellant was due to the appellant's negligence, carelessness, or inattention. See *Houlihan v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 545 N.W.2d 863 (Iowa 1996). Similarly, a default should be upheld when the appellant has ignored clear requirements in the rules.

In this case, the appellant did not register a phone number for the hearing. As a courtesy, to allow for any misunderstandings or mistakes, the appellant was granted additional time not required by statute or rule. However, the appellant did not contact the Appeals Bureau during the additional time allotted. Therefore, the appellant is in default, the appeal is dismissed, and the representative's decision remains in force and effect.

Pursuant to the rule, the appellant may make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened, but must do so within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The written request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the end of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time. The appellant also has the option to appeal the decision directly to the Employment Appeal Board, whose address is listed at the top right caption.

**DECISION:**

The August 2, 2021, reference 01, unemployment insurance decision denying benefits remains in effect as the appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed.



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Sean M. Nelson
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax (515) 725-9067

September 30, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

smn/mn