

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**GARY THOMPSON**  
Claimant

**WALMART INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 20A-UI-05238-CL-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 03/22/20**  
**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) – Able & Available – Availability Disqualifications  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment  
PL 116-136, Sec. 2104(b) – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

On May 27, 2020, the claimant filed an appeal from the May 20, 2020, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based on claimant's availability for work. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on June 30, 2020. Claimant participated personally and was represented by attorney Mike Tulis. Employer participated through store manager Angelique Boring and front end coach Julie Bonamarte. Claimant's Exhibits A and B were entered into the record.

**ISSUES:**

Is the claimant able to and available for work?  
Is the claimant on a voluntary leave of absence?  
Was the claimant overpaid unemployment insurance benefits?  
Is the claimant eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant began working for employer on March 24, 2018. Claimant works for employer as a part-time cashier.

Claimant has a number of underlying health conditions that put him at high risk if he develops COVID 19. Employer granted claimant a COVID 19 Emergency Leave of Absence from March 15, 2020, until June 1, 2020.

Claimant has received regular, state-funded unemployment insurance benefits and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation since filing this claim.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes that the claimant is not able to work and available for work effective March 22, 2020.

Iowa Code section 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 section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", unnumbered paragraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 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 section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

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.

Here, claimant was on a leave of absence due to underlying health conditions that put him at high risk of complications if he contracts COVID 19. Claimant has not established he is able to and available for work, even under the United States Department of Labor's guidance to flexibly interpret this requirement. See Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 10-20. Therefore, claimant is not eligible for regular, state-funded unemployment insurance benefits from the effective date of his claim.

Even though claimant is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits under state law, he may be eligible for federally funded unemployment insurance benefits under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("Cares Act"), Public Law 116-136. Section 2102 of the CARES Act creates a new temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) that in general provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits. An individual receiving PUA benefits may also receive the \$600 weekly benefit amount (WBA) under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program if he or she is eligible for such compensation for the week claimed.

The administrative law judge will not consider the issue of whether claimant has been overpaid benefits prior to the denial decision being issued, as claimant may be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, and in that case, such a decision would be unnecessary. However, the administrative law judge cautions claimant that if he does not apply and/or is not approved for PUA, he may be found to have been overpaid benefits and will have to repay those benefits.

**DECISION:**

The May 20, 2020, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The claimant is not available for work effective March 22, 2020, and regular, state-funded unemployment insurance benefits are denied. Claimant may be eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. Therefore, no overpayment decision will be issued at this time.



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Christine A. Louis  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax (515)478-3528

July 10, 2020  
Decision Dated and Mailed

cal/mh

*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, 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. If you are not allowed PUA benefits, the agency may find that you have been overpaid regular, unemployment insurance benefits and you may be required to repay those benefits.**

Additional information on PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.