

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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**MEAGAN A HUBENKA**  
Claimant

**APPEAL 19A-UI-09965-B2**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT**

**OC: 06/30/19**  
**Claimant: Appellant (6)**

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Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

An appeal was filed from the December 11, 2019, (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision that concluded claimant was overpaid unemployment benefits after a separation from employment. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for an in person hearing scheduled for January 28, 2020. The appellant/claimant failed to appear for the hearing, although her husband did appear for her. Based on the appellant's failure to participate in the hearing and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law and decision.

**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 failed to appear for the hearing.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties, "If you do not participate in the hearing, the judge may dismiss the appeal or issue a decision without considering your evidence."

The representative's decision had concluded that the claimant was not eligible for unemployment 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) provide:

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 provided in Iowa Code § 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request 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. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.

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. This rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a reasonable amount of time after the hearing is scheduled. It can be assumed an appellant intends to participate in the hearing simply by the fact an appeal is filed, but their responsibility does not end there and all parties are required to follow the specific written instructions printed on the hearing notice. Due process does not require the non-appealing party and the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau to wait for indefinite periods to see if an appellant wants or remembers to prosecute the appeal. The appellant filed the appeal and is held solely responsible for going forward with the case in an expeditious manner. The rule holds appellant in default if not present at the start of hearing. As a courtesy, appellant was granted additional time not required by statute or rule. Here, notwithstanding additional time, notice and opportunity, the appellant failed to prosecute the case expeditiously and as such the appellant is in default and the appeal shall be dismissed. Iowa Code §17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 24.14(7). The representative's decision remains in force and effect.

Pursuant to the rule, the appellant must make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened 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 to the Employment Appeal Board, whose address is listed at the top right caption.

It is again noted that claimant's representative, Nathan Hubbenka, did appear at the time and date set for hearing. Whereas Mr. Hubenka was unable to offer firsthand knowledge, he could still act as representative if he were to have presented a written document signed by claimant requesting that he act as representative. 871 IAC 26.6(8). 871 IAC 26.6(7) indicates, "Any party *may appear by*, or be represented by, an attorney at law, or a duly authorized representative of an interested party." (Italics added for emphasis). As such, the administrative law judge would entertain a reopening of this hearing, if timely filed by the appellant, and claimant, if she were to fill out a written request for representation, sign that request, and file it with the appeals bureau at least three days prior to any future hearing.

**DECISION:**

The December 11, 2019, (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision stating benefits had been overpaid remains in effect as the appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed.

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Blair A. Bennett  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
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Decision Dated and Mailed

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