

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

**RHONDA WATTERS**  
Claimant

**WESLEYLIFE**  
Employer

**APPEAL NO: 20A-UI-13445-JTT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 07/19/20**  
**Claimant: Appellant (6)**

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Able & Available  
Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant filed an appeal from the October 26, 2020, reference 01, decision that denied benefits for the period beginning July 19, 2020, based on the deputy's conclusion that the claimant was unavailable for work. A notice of hearing was mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 1:30 p.m. on December 23, 2020. The employer registered a telephone number for the hearing and was available through Hope Summers of Equifax and witness Cindy Severson. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the claimant/appellant, Rhonda Watters, failed to respond to the hearing notice instructions to register a telephone number at which she could be reached for the hearing. Based upon the claimant/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 upon the claimant/appellant not participating in the hearing?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The claimant is the appellant in this matter. The claimant was properly notified of the appeal hearing set for 1:30 p.m. on December 23, 2020. On November 24, 2020, the Appeals Bureau mailed the hearing notice to the claimant's last-known address of record. On December 1, 2020, the United States Postal Service returned the correspondence with a stocker indicating that the correspondence could not be delivered as addressed and that the correspondence could not be forwarded. The Appeals Bureau received the returned correspondence on December 2, 2020. On December 2, 2020, an Appeals Bureau clerk emailed the hearing notice to the claimant at her last-known email address of record. The claimant did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. The claimant did not comply with the hearing notice instructions to register a telephone number at which she could be reached for the hearing. The claimant did not provide a telephone number

in her appeal. The claimant has not provided the Appeals Bureau with a telephone number since filing the appeal. Prior to entering this default decision, the administrative law judge confirmed that the mailing address the Appeals Bureau used is the same mailing address that appears on the claimant's appeal document, in the database readout (DBRO), and in the Claimant Information Database (CID). Prior to entering this default decision, the administrative law judge confirmed that the email address the Appeals Bureau used is the same email address that appears on the claimant's appeal document and in the Claimant Information Database (CID).

The October 26, 2020, reference 01, decision denied benefits for the period beginning July 19, 2020, based on the deputy's conclusion that the claimant was unavailable for work.

#### **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.

Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-26.14(7) provides:

(7) 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 to reopen the hearing in writing 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.

The claimant/appellant appealed the representative's decision but failed to participate in the hearing. The claimant/appellant has therefore defaulted on her appeal pursuant to Iowa Code §17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7), and the representative's decision remains in force and effect.

Because the claimant only made weekly claims for the three weeks between July 19, 2020 and August 8, 2020, the disqualification set forth in the October 26, 2020, reference 01, decision only applies to those three weeks and does not prevent the claimant from being eligible for benefits in connection with some future claim week. The claimant must meet all other eligibility requirements.

**DECISION:**

The claimant defaulted on her appeal. The appeal is dismissed. The October 26, 2020, reference 01, decision that denied benefits for the period beginning July 19, 2020, based on the deputy's conclusion that the claimant was unavailable for work, remains in effect. However, the impact of the decision is limited to the period of July 19, 2020 through August 8, 2020.



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James E. Timberland  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
Iowa Workforce Development  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax 515-478-3528

January 11, 2021  
Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/scn

**NOTE TO CLAIMANT:**

- This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits 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 do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits under state law and are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19, you may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** For more information on how to apply for PUA, go to <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>. **If you do not apply for and are not approved for PUA, you may be required to repay the benefits you have received.**