

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

DANIEL R LEWIS
Claimant

WELLS ENTERPRISES INC
Employer

APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-08815-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 07/27/14
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated August 18, 2014, reference 02, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on September 11, 2014. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Kathy Lauritzen, with witness, Doug Carter.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on July 16, 2014. Employer discharged claimant on July 16, 2014 because of excessive tardiness and absenteeism.

Upon hire claimant had received an employee handbook that explained the progressive discipline policy for absenteeism and tardiness. Employer followed this policy in giving warnings and suspensions for reaching certain point milestones prior to his termination. Claimant totaled ten points within a rolling calendar year which led to his being terminated. Claimant's last half point was received for being one minute late to punch in for work. Claimant received the points within seven months of being hired.

Claimant stated that the great majority of points received were received because he was taking care of his sick young child. Claimant did not provide doctor's notes to the company to inform them of why he was not at work, but had called in on the days missed. Claimant had not worked sufficient hours such that he could qualify when he first asked about FMLA leave.

Claimant tried to be in contact with both his supervisor and with human resources representatives to explain his situation prior to being terminated, to no avail.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation. The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that one unexcused absence is not misconduct even when it followed nine other excused absences and was in violation of a direct order. Sallis v. EAB, 437 N.W.2d 895 (Iowa 1989). Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984), held that the absences must be both excessive and unexcused. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that excessive is more than one. Three incidents of tardiness or absenteeism after a warning has been held misconduct. Clark v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 317 N.W.2d 517 (Iowa Ct. App. 1982). While three is a reasonable interpretation of excessive based on current case law and Webster's Dictionary, the interpretation is best derived from the facts presented.

In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning absenteeism. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant knew through the numerous warnings that he was close to being dismissed. Any employee in a like situation would have to reset their schedule to make sure that they are not late for work while they attempt to seek avenues through which both childcare and attendance at work could be balanced. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated August 18, 2014, reference 02, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/css