

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

HARRY PETERSEN

Claimant

AVANTIC LODGING ENTERPRISES INC

Employer

APPEAL NO. 21A-UI-19433-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 04/19/20

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Appeal

Iowa Code § 96.4-3 – Able and Available

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from the October 16, 2020, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on October 27, 2021. The claimant did participate. The employer did participate through Jessica Alvarado.

ISSUES:

Whether the appeal is timely?

Whether claimant is able and available for work?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: A decision was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record on October 16, 2020. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by October 26, 2020. The appeal was not filed until September 1, 2021, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. Claimant stated he was not sure if he received any of these decisions.

Claimant additionally stated that he'd stopped filing for unemployment benefits months prior to being sent the decisions denying benefits. As he was no longer filing, receiving four decisions denying benefits – if he did receive them – was very confusing.

Claimant worked as a part time maintenance officer for employer. Claimant has ongoing health concerns that caused him to miss a large amount of work between April 19, 2020 and June 27, 2020. Claimant had concerns that the nearby railroad was housing Covid-infected workers at the hotel claimant worked. Claimant's doctor wrote a note saying claimant was to be away from work for some unspecified period.

Claimant returned to work for a couple of weeks in May, and returned to his job in late June.

At all times relevant to these matters, employer had ongoing work available to claimant at his regular hours and wages if claimant was willing to work.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part:

The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. . . . Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision.

The ten calendar days for appeal begin running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

Pursuant to rules Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.2(96)(1) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant may not have had a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law may have been due to an Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal is deemed timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code Section 96.6-2, and the administrative law judge retains jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See, *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

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. 871-24.22(1)a provides:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

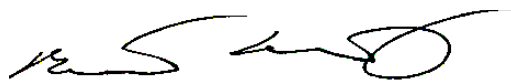
(1) Able to work. An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

a. Illness, injury or pregnancy. Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

Inasmuch as the claimant has not shown the ability to work, he has not established the ability to work. Benefits shall be denied effective April 19, 2020 through May 20, 2020.

DECISION:

The October 16, 2020, reference 01, decision is affirmed. Although the appeal in this case was deemed timely, the decision of the representative remains in effect as claimant was not able and available to work throughout the April 19 through May 20, 2020 time period.



Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

November 10, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn

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 due to disqualifying separations may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.