

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

---



**APPEAL 24A-UI-01618-CS-T  
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**



**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

[REDACTED]  
Claimant

[REDACTED]  
Employer

**APPEAL 24A-UI-01618-CS-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 12/31/23  
Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) – Leave of Absence

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

On February 9, 2024, the claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the February 5, 2024, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based on claimant requesting and granted a leave of absence for work. Benefits are denied as of December 31, 2023. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on March 4, 2024. Claimant participated. Employer participated through [REDACTED]

**ISSUES:**

- I. Is the claimant on an approved leave of absence?
- II. Is the claimant able to and available for work?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant began working for employer on June 8, 2022. Claimant last worked as a full-time ready mix concrete driver.

On November 2, 2023, claimant was subject to a DOT random drug test due to his CDL. Claimant tested positive for cocaine. Claimant was notified of the positive test on November 13, 2023. Claimant last worked for the employer on November 14, 2023.

Claimant was required to complete the Substance Abuse Program (SAP) in order to retain his position. Claimant was required to complete an 8-hour online course and attend three virtual meetings. On November 27, 2023 claimant completed the online course and by December 7, 2023, claimant completed the three virtual meetings. The SAP counselor informed claimant that he had completed the course and was directed not to contact human resources because it would slow the process down for him to return to work.

On December 10, 2023, claimant's DOT Clearinghouse updated to reflect the completion of his SAP requirements. The employer checked on claimant's status in January 2024 and was

informed he was still completing the program. This was inaccurate information. The employer requested an inquiry into claimant's DOT clearinghouse status on March 4, 2024. The claimant has not worked for the employer since November 14, 2023.

### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes as follows:

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

(emphasis added).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 24.22(2) provides:

Available for work. The availability requirement is satisfied when an individual is willing, able, and ready to accept suitable work which the individual does not have good cause to refuse, that is, the individual is genuinely attached to the labor market. Since, under unemployment insurance laws, it is the availability of an individual that is required to be tested, the labor market must be described in terms of the individual. A labor market for an individual means a market for the type of service which the individual offers in the geographical area in which the individual offers the service. Market in that sense does not

mean that job vacancies must exist; the purpose of unemployment insurance is to compensate for lack of job vacancies. It means only that the type of services which an individual is offering is generally performed in the geographical area in which the individual is offering the services.

j. Leave of absence. A leave of absence negotiated with the consent of both parties, employer and employee, is deemed a period of voluntary unemployment for the employee-individual, and the individual is considered ineligible for benefits for the period.

(1) If at the end of a period or term of negotiated leave of absence the employer fails to reemploy the employee-individual, the individual is considered laid off and eligible for benefits.

(2) If the employee-individual fails to return at the end of the leave of absence and subsequently becomes unemployed the individual is considered as having voluntarily quit and therefore is ineligible for benefits.

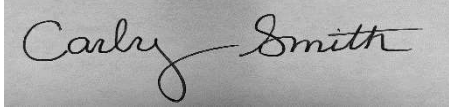
(3) The period or term of a leave of absence may be extended, but only if there is evidence that both parties have voluntarily agreed.

The standard of being able to and available for work is independent of whether the injury is work-related or not. See *Geiken v. Luthern Home for the Aged*, 468 N.W.2d 223 (Iowa 1991)(finding harmless error in applying the voluntary quit standards). The burden is on the claimant to establish that he is able and available for work within the meaning of the statute. Iowa Code § 96.6(2); Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22.

Claimant was on a voluntary leave of absence from November 14, 2023, through December 10, 2023. The parties agreed to the leave to allow claimant to participate in the SAP program. Claimant completed his requirements and was ready to return to work as of December 10, 2023, when the clearinghouse was updated and claimant was ready to submit his return to work drug test. For reasons unknown, the employer did not submit an inquiry until March 4, 2024. Claimant did not agree to the extended leave of absence after December 10, 2023. Claimant did not file benefits until December 31, 2023. As a result, claimant is eligible for benefits beginning December 31, 2023.

**DECISION:**

The February 5, 2024, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is REVERSED. The claimant was able to and available for full-time work effective December 31, 2023. Benefits are allowed effective December 31, 2023.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carly Smith".

---

Carly Smith  
Administrative Law Judge

March 5, 2024  
Decision Dated and Mailed

scn

**APPEAL RIGHTS.** If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Iowa Employment Appeal Board  
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100  
Des Moines, Iowa 50321  
Fax: (515)281-7191  
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

**Note to Parties:** YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

**Note to Claimant:** It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

**SERVICE INFORMATION:**

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

**DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN.** Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Iowa Employment Appeal Board  
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100  
Des Moines, Iowa 50321  
Fax: (515)281-7191  
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que se encuentra en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> o comunicándose con el Tribunal de Distrito Secretario del tribunal <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

**Nota para las partes:** USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

**Nota para el reclamante:** es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

**SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:**

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.