

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS AND APPEALS  
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION, UI APPEALS BUREAU**

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**LEESA M. WHEELER**  
Claimant

**DIA APPEAL NO. 23IWDUI0034**

**IWD APPEAL NO. 22A-UI-15698**

**GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NE IA, INC.**  
Employer

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 06/12/22  
Claimant: Appellant (6)**

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Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default  
Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant/appellant, Leesa Wheeler, filed an appeal from a July 25, 2022, unemployment insurance decision that concluded she was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. On August 25, 2022, a Notice of Telephone Hearing was mailed to the appellant's last known address notifying her of a telephone hearing scheduled for September 26, 2022. The Notice of Telephone Hearing instructed the claimant to call a toll-free conference number on the assigned date and time. Because the claimant did not call in on the date and time scheduled, no hearing was held.

**ISSUE:**

Should the appeal be dismissed based on the appellant's failure to appear and participate?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The appellant was properly notified of the scheduled hearing for this appeal. The appellant did not call into the conference call at the time scheduled for this appeal hearing. The appellant did not request an additional postponement of the hearing. No hearing was held.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advised parties:

**DATE:** September 26, 2022  
**TIME:** 2:30 p.m. Central Time  
**ALJ:** Carla Hamborg  
**TOLL-FREE HEARING PHONE NUMBER: 1-866-770-6601**

At the date and time of the hearing, all parties must call the toll-free hearing number listed above. Important additional instructions for participating in this hearing are on the next page of this Notice. Failure to appear and participate in the hearing may result in the entry of a default judgment.

The back page of the hearing notice provides further instruction and warning:

**It is your responsibility to call in for the hearing. The judge will not call you. If you do not call using the above instructions, you will not be able to participate in the hearing. If you have technical difficulties connecting at the time of hearing, please call (515) 281-6468.**

The record was left open for a grace period of 15 minutes after the hearing start time to give the appellant a reasonable opportunity to participate. Holding the appellant in default for failure to appear and participate during a 15-minute window after the hearing start time is reasonable considering the time allocated for each unemployment hearing. The unemployment insurance decision had concluded the claimant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

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

The Iowa Administrative Procedure 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.**

Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7)(c) provides:

If the appealing party 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 in writing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

**c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record. (Emphasis added.)**

A default will not be set aside for ordinary negligence or want of ordinary care. See *Houlihan v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 545 N.W.2d 863 (Iowa 1996). Here, the hearing notice clearly instructed the claimant to call the toll-free hearing phone number at the listed hearing time. An alternative telephone number was provided if the claimant experienced technical difficulties.

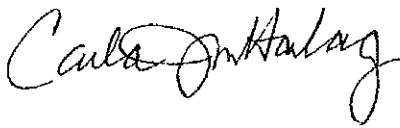
Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to each party. *The rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a 'reasonable' or certain amount of time after the hearing is scheduled.* The appellant's responsibility does not end with filing the appeal. Rather, each party is required to follow the written instructions printed on the hearing notice. The rule holds an appellant in default if not present *at the start* of hearing. As a courtesy, the appellant was granted an additional 15-minute grace period not required by statute or rule.

Here, the appellant failed to call in for the appeal at the scheduled date and time without providing a good-cause reason for the delay or failure to do so. Accordingly, the appellant is in default, and the appeal shall be dismissed. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7). The unemployment insurance decision remains in force and effect. If the appellant

does not intend to pursue this appeal, the appellant need not take any action. If the appellant intends to pursue this appeal, 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 on the notice of hearing 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 directly to the Employment Appeal Board at the address listed in the caption appeal rights information.

**DECISION:**

The July 25, 2022, unemployment insurance decision concluding the claimant was not eligible for unemployment compensation benefits remains in effect as the appellant is in default, and the appeal is dismissed.



Carla J. Hamborg  
Administrative Law Judge

September 27, 2022

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Decision Dated and Mailed

CJH:aa

cc: Leesa M. Wheeler, Claimant (by first class mail)  
Goodwill Industries of NE IA, Inc., Employer (by first class mail)  
Joni Benson (by AEDMS)

**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:

Employment Appeal Board  
4 th Floor – Lucas Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
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:

Employment Appeal Board  
4th Floor – Lucas Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
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 adquiriera 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.

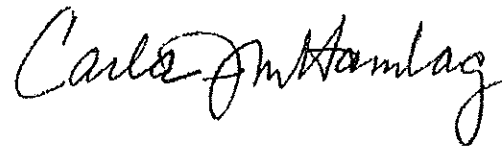
Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

## **SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:**

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

**Case Title:** LEESA WHEELER V. GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NE IA, INC.  
**Case Number:** 23IWDUI0034  
**Type:** Order

IT IS SO ORDERED.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carla J. Hamborg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

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Carla Hamborg, Administrative Law Judge