

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section  
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

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UNITED STATES CELLULAR CORP  
C/O FRICK UC EXPRESS  
PO BOX 283  
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-05572-ET  
OC: 04-24-05 R: 03  
Claimant: Respondent (1)

**This Decision Shall Become Final**, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

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.

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.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may 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. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

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(Administrative Law Judge)

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(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct  
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the May 12, 2005, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on June 14, 2005. The claimant participated in the hearing. Angie Bailey, Human Resources Coordinator and Misti Gryp, Customer Service Supervisor, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time customer service representative for United States Cellular from October 4, 2004 to April 27, 2005. She was discharged from employment due to excessive unexcused absenteeism. The claimant had been issued a verbal warning November 8, 2004. Written warnings were issued March 29 and April 8, 2005. A final written warning was issued April 22, 2005, because the claimant was a few minutes late April 9, April 11 and April 21, 2005. She was absent due to illness April 17 and left work early April 18, 2005. The final incident occurred April 24, 2005, when the claimant was late and left work early without permission. The claimant subsequently left a voice mail informing the employer that she had to pick up her daughter at daycare as her daughter was sick. She assumed she would be fired because she was on a final written warning so she did not report to work the next day.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

Iowa Code section 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.

871 IAC 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 Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

871 IAC 24.32(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

The claimant was discharged for a final unexcused absence April 27, 2005. The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. The term "absenteeism" also encompasses conduct that is more accurately referred to as "tardiness." An absence is an extended tardiness, and an incident of tardiness is a limited absence. Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). The claimant's final absence was due to her daughter's illness when there was no one else to take care of the child. In light of good faith effort, absences due to inability to obtain childcare for a sick child, although excessive, did not constitute misconduct. McCourtney v. Imprimis Technology, Inc., 465 N.W.2d 721 (Minn. App. 1991). Inasmuch as the employer has not established a final act of misconduct, benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The May 12, 2005, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

je/pjs