

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

SCOTT H LANCASTER
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-02414-S2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

PRO COOPERATIVE
Employer

OC: 02/28/12
Claimant: Respondent (2/R)

Section 96.5-1-d – Voluntary Quit for Medical Reasons
Section 96.4-3 – Able and Available
Section 96.3-7 – Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Pro Cooperative (employer) appealed a representative's February 28, 2012 decision (reference 02) that concluded Scott Lancaster (claimant) was eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for March 27, 2012. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Amy Ford, Administrative Assistant/Payroll Clerk, and Jason Raveling, Branch Manager.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason and whether the claimant is able and available for work.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on October 31, 2011, as a full-time truck driver. The claimant suffered from a non-work-related condition that required him to wear boots with braces for a time. He was absent off and on due to his condition and the employer consented to his absence.

On January 3, 2012, the claimant's physician released him to return to work with restrictions. He had to wear his boots and not drive a truck. The claimant thought he would have to wear the boots for approximately two weeks. The employer found work for him in the office. On January 16, 2012, the claimant's physician told the claimant that he would be in the boots for a longer period of time. The employer did not have work for the claimant that met his restrictions. The employer consented to the claimant's leaving and asked to keep it informed of the claimant's progress. The claimant has not been released to return to work without restrictions.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant voluntarily quit work without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code section 96.5-1-d provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department. But the individual shall not be disqualified if the department finds that:

d. The individual left employment because of illness, injury or pregnancy upon the advice of a licensed and practicing physician, and upon knowledge of the necessity for absence immediately notified the employer, or the employer consented to the absence, and after recovering from the illness, injury or pregnancy, when recovery was certified by a licensed and practicing physician, the individual returned to the employer and offered to perform services and the individual's regular work or comparable suitable work was not available, if so found by the department, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980). A claimant is not disqualified for leaving employment if he or she (1) left employment by reason of illness, injury or pregnancy; (2) on the advice of a licensed and practicing physician; (3) and immediately notified the employer or the employer consented to the absence; (4) and when certified as recovered by a physician, the individual returned to the employer and offered services but the regular or comparable suitable work was not available. Area Residential Care, Inc. v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 323 N.W.2d 257 (Iowa 1982). A "recovery" under Iowa Code section 96.5-1-d means a complete recovery without restriction. Hedges v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 368 N.W.2d 862 (Iowa App. 1985).

The claimant left work due to an injury under the advice of his physician. The employer consented to his leaving. The claimant has failed to provide the employer with certification that he has recovered. In addition the claimant has failed to offer his services to the employer. The claimant has failed to meet the requirements of the statute and, therefore, is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits. The claimant may requalify by returning to the employer with an unconditional release. The claimant could then receive benefits if regular work or comparable suitable work was not available.

The next issue is whether the claimant was able and available for work. For the following reasons the administrative law judge concludes he is.

871 IAC 24.23(1) provides:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(1) An individual who is ill and presently not able to perform work due to illness.

When an employee is ill and unable to perform work due to that illness, he is considered to be unavailable for work. The claimant was released to return to work with restrictions by his physician. He is considered to be available for work because he physician stated he was able and available for work. The claimant is not disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

The claimant has received benefits since filing the claim herein. Pursuant to this decision, those benefits may now constitute an overpayment. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

DECISION:

The representative's February 28, 2012 decision (reference 02) is reversed. The claimant voluntarily left work without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the claimant's weekly benefit amount provided the claimant is otherwise eligible. The claimant is

not disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits because he is able and available for work. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/css