

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

SYDNEY B OHRT
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 22A-UI-14522-JT-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

OC: 03/29/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code Section 96.3(7) – Overpayment
P.L. 116-136, §2104 – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On June 28, 2022, Sydney Ohrt (claimant) filed a late appeal from the May 4, 2022 (reference 04) decision that held the claimant was overpaid \$507.00 in regular benefits and \$3,600.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) for six weeks between March 29, 2020 and May 9, 2020, due to the reference 01 decision that disqualified the claimant for benefits in connection with the claimant's voluntary quit from BWW Resources, L.L.C. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on August 8, 2022. Claimant participated. The hearing in this matter was consolidated with the hearing in Appeal Number 22A-UI-14521-JT-T. Exhibit A, the online appeal, was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the following Agency administrative records: the reference 01, through 04 decisions, the reference 01 fact-finding documentation, DBRO, KPYX, KCCO, and WAGE-A/WAGE-C.

ISSUE:

Whether the appeal was timely. Whether there is good cause to treat the appeal as timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

Sydney Ohrt (claimant) established an original claim for benefits that was effective March 29, 2020. At that time, the claimant provided an Independence, Iowa mailing address that corresponded to the claimant's permanent where the claimant's parents have at all relevant times resided. At the time the claimant established her claim and until May 2022, the claimant was a student at the University of Northern Iowa and resided in Cedar Falls. The claimant relied on her parents to receive her mail, discern whether the mail was significant, and to electronically forward the correspondence to the claimant.

On February 23, 2021, the claimant participated in a telephonic fact-finding interview that addressed her separation from part-time employment with BWW Resources, L.L.C., doing business as Buffalo Wild Wings.

On February 24, 2021, Iowa Workforce Development mailed the February 24, 2021 (reference 01) decision to the claimant's Independence last-known address of record. The reference 01 decision disqualified the claimant for benefits, and that held the employer's account would not be charged for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant voluntarily quit the employment on November 9, 2019 without good cause attributable to the employer. The reference 01 decision stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by March 6, 2021 or was received by the Appeals Section by that date. The decision stated that if the deadline for appeal fell on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the deadline would be extended to the next working day. March 6, 2021 was a Saturday and the next working day was Monday, March 8, 2021. The decision included clear and concise instructions for filing an appeal and included a customer service number the claimant could call if she had questions about the decision or about the appeal process. The reference 01 decision was delivered to the claimant's address of record in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal. The claimant reviewed the decision, discounted the significance of the decision, and did not take steps to file an appeal from the decision by the March 8, 2021 extended appeal deadline.

In June 2021, the claimant participated in a fact-finding interview concerning a different employment and different set of eligibility issues. On June 22, 2021, Iowa Workforce Development Benefits Bureau issued the June 22, 2021, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant for the period beginning March 29, 2020, so long as the claimant met all other eligibility requirements, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant was still employed with River Edge Investments, L.L.C., was able to work, was available for work, and was on a short-term layoff from that employer.

On May 4, 2022, Iowa Workforce Development Benefits Bureau mailed the reference 04 overpayment to the claimant's Independence last-known address of record. The overpayment decision held the claimant was overpaid \$507.00 in regular benefits and \$3,600.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) for six weeks between March 29, 2020 and May 9, 2020, due to the reference 01 decision regarding the claimant's voluntary quit from BWW Resources, L.L.C. The reference 04 decision was delivered to the claimant's address of record in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal. The reference 04 decision stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by May 19, 2022 or was received by the Appeals Bureau by that date. Rather than providing a May 14, 2022 appeal deadline, 10 days after the mailing date of the decision, as required by the timeliness statute, the reference 04 decision added five extra days to the appeal period. The decision included clear and concise instructions for filing an appeal and included a customer service numbers the claimant could call if she had questions about the decision or about the appeal process. The claimant (and her parents) discounted the significance of the overpayment decision, decided it was a mistake, and did not take steps to file an appeal by the May 19, 2022 extended appeal deadline.

On June 28, 2022, the claimant completed and transmitted an online appeal from the May 4, 2022 (reference 04) overpayment decision. The claimant stated in the appeal that she received the decision on June 1, 2022, meaning that the decision came to her attention that day. The Appeals Bureau received the appeal on June 28, 2022 and treated it as an appeal from the reference 04 overpayment decision and from the earlier disqualification decision.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. 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. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". 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. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten-day deadline for appeal begins to run on the date Workforce Development mails the decision to the parties. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the Agency 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).

An appeal submitted by mail is deemed filed on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it was received, or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(a). See also *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). An appeal submitted by any other means is deemed filed on the date it is received by the Unemployment Insurance Division of Iowa Workforce Development. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(b).

The evidence in the record establishes 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). One 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).

No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the division after considering the circumstances in the case. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2)(c).

The evidence in the record establishes an untimely appeal from the May 4, 2021 (reference 04) overpayment decision. The evidence establishes that the claimant received the reference 04 decision in a timely manner, had a reasonable opportunity to file an appeal by the appeal deadline, but unreasonably delayed filing the appeal to June 28, 2022. The late filing of the appeal was not attributable to the Iowa Workforce Development error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. There is not good cause to treat the late appeal as a timely appeal. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2). Because the appeal was untimely, the May 4, 2022 (reference 04) overpayment decision is a final decision and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to disturb the decision. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The claimant's appeal from the May 4, 2021 (reference 04) overpayment decision was untimely. The reference 04 decision remains in effect.



James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

September 27, 2022
Decision Dated and Mailed

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Note to Claimant: This decision determines you have been overpaid FPUC under the CARES Act. If you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal by following the instructions on the final page of this decision. Additionally, instructions for requesting a waiver of this FPUC overpayment can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/unemployment-insurance-overpayment>. If this decision becomes final and you are not eligible for a FPUC waiver, you will have to repay the FPUC benefits you received.

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
4th 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>.

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 está en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf>.

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.