

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MARIA E SARINANA
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 17A-UI-01561-S1-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WEST LIBERTY FOODS LLC
Employer

OC: 01/15/17
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Maria Sarinana (claimant) appealed a representative's February 2, 2017, decision (reference 01) that concluded she was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits after her separation from employment with West Liberty Foods (employer). After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for March 6, 2017. The claimant was represented by Lorraine Gaynor, Attorney at Law, and participated personally through Teo Rios, Interpreter. The employer participated by Rosa Frausto, Human Resources Specialist. The claimant offered and Exhibit A was received into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

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 May 23, 2016, as a full-time breath trim. The claimant signed for receipt of the employer's handbook on May 23, 2016. The handbook stated that employees would be terminated if they accumulated eight attendance points. Seven absences due to medical issues would result in one point. On November 3, 2016, the employer issued the claimant a notice of accumulation of four attendance points. On December 1, 2016, the employer issued the claimant a written warning for accumulating 5.5 attendance points. She received 1.5 points for absences associated with her children's medical issues. She received four points for absence due to properly reported medical absences. The claimant understood she could be terminated for accumulation of attendance points.

The claimant notified the employer she was going to have surgery on December 2, 2016. December 1, 2016, was her last day of work. The claimant provided the employer with a note excusing her from work from December 2 to 19, 2016. The employer told her she could have two weeks off. After that she would accumulate points.

The claimant developed an infection and was not released to return to work on December 19, 2016. She provided a doctor's note and properly reported her absence. The note indicated she could return to work without restriction on January 14, 2017. On January 9, 2017, the employer terminated the claimant from employment.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not discharged for misconduct.

Iowa Code § 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer must establish not only misconduct but that there was a final incident of misconduct which precipitated the discharge. The last incidents of absence were properly reported medical issues. The claimant's absence does not amount to job misconduct because it was properly reported. The employer has failed to provide any evidence of willful and deliberate misconduct which would be a final incident leading to the discharge. The claimant was discharged but there was no misconduct.

DECISION:

The representative's February 2, 2017, decision (reference 01) is reversed. The employer has not met its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/rvs