

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

KARISSA L SHEFFIELD
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 10A-UI-14779-H2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

KWIK SHOP INC
Employer

OC: 09-26-10
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the October 21, 2010, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on December 15, 2010. The claimant did participate along with her witnesses Dale Gorsh. The employer did participate through Ronald Krueger, Store Manager and (representative) Jeremy Glass, District Advisor.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged due to job-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a clerk full time beginning July 19, 2009 through September 28, 2010 when she was discharged. The claimant was scheduled to work at 3:00 p.m. Just a little before 11:00 a.m. she received a voice mail message from Store Manager Ronald Krueger telling her that she had to be to work early at 11:00 a.m. and if she did not show up for the 11:00 a.m. shift she could consider herself done with Kwik Shop. The claimant did not even receive the message from Mr. Krueger until after 11:00 a.m. and based on the plain meaning of his language, she assumed she was discharged because she had not shown up for the 11:00 a.m. shift. The claimant had no prior warnings for any attendance issues.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

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.

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.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. IDJS*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. IDJS*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial."

In an at-will employment environment an employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job-related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation.

The question of whether the refusal to perform a specific task constitutes misconduct must be determined by evaluating both the reasonableness of the employer's request in light of all the circumstances and the employee's reason for noncompliance. *Endicott v. IDJS*, 367 N.W.2d 300 (Iowa App. 1985).

It was simply unreasonable for the employer to require the claimant come into work early with no notice. The claimant could not have complied with the order because she did not even receive it until after 11:00 a.m. The claimant was correct in assuming she was discharged, as Mr. Krueger made it clear her employment would end if she did not come into work early. The employer has not met their burden of proof to establish that claimant acted deliberately or with recurrent negligence in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. An employee is entitled to fair warning that the employer will no longer tolerate certain performance and

conduct. Without fair warning, an employee has no reasonable way of knowing that there are changes that need be made in order to preserve the employment. If an employer expects an employee to conform to certain expectations or face discharge, appropriate (preferably written), detailed, and reasonable notice should be given. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The October 21, 2010 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Teresa K. Hillary
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

tkh/css