

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

NORMA I LUJANO
717 VESTAL ST
STORM LAKE IA 50588

**BUENA VISTA REGIONAL
MEDICAL CENTER
ATTN HUMAN RESOURCES
1525 W 5TH ST
PO BOX 309
STORM LAKE IA 50588**

Appeal Number: 06A-UI-00704-DT
OC: 12/11/05 R: 01
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, 4th 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.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge
Section 96.7-2-a(2) – Charges Against Employer's Account

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Buena Vista Regional Medical Center (employer) appealed a representative's January 10, 2006 decision (reference 01) that concluded Norma I. Lujano (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on February 6, 2006. The claimant participated in the hearing. Carrie Turnquist appeared on the employer's behalf and presented testimony from two other witnesses, Lona Stille and Laurie Gaffney. During the hearing, Employer's Exhibit One was entered into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for work-connected misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant started working for the employer on October 17, 2005. She worked full time as patient registrar. Her last day of work was December 1, 2005. The employer discharged her on that date. The reason asserted for the discharge was multiple failing in job performance.

The claimant had been verbally counseled twice, on November 13 and November 17, 2005, for wearing jeans to work against dress code. She had been late on November 14, 2005 to take care of a personal matter, and on November 15, 2005 was absent all day due to personal issues. On November 27, 2005 she left at the end of her shift even though there was some work she should have completed before leaving and did not. She had been having problems missing punches clocking in and out on a number of days. The employer also did not believe she had the performance skills she appeared to have when she was hired. Coworkers indicated they had difficulty working with her.

Prior to December 1, 2005, the claimant agreed to start her shift at 8:00 a.m. instead of her normal 9:00 a.m. start time. She forgot the schedule change, and did not report for work until 9:00 a.m. She was then discharged.

The claimant established an unemployment insurance benefit year effective December 11, 2005.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the employer discharged the claimant for reasons establishing work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. The issue is not whether the employer was right to terminate the claimant's employment, 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 is misconduct that warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate questions. Pierce v. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code §96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

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).

The focus of the definition of misconduct is on acts or omissions by a claimant that "rise to the level of being deliberate, intentional or culpable." Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa App. 1986). The acts must show:

1. Willful and wanton disregard of an employer's interest, such as found in:
 - a. Deliberate violation of standards of behavior that the employer has the right to expect of its employees, or
 - b. Deliberate disregard of standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect of its employees; or
2. Carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to:
 - a. Manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design; or
 - b. Show an intentional and substantial disregard of:
 1. The employer's interest, or
 2. The employee's duties and obligations to the employer.

Henry, supra. The reason cited by the employer for discharging the claimant is her accumulated performance issues. Misconduct connotes volition. A failure in job performance is not misconduct unless it is intentional. Huntoon, supra. There is no evidence the claimant intentionally failed to live up to the employer's expectations. Under the circumstances of this case, the claimant's behavior was the result of inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, inadvertence, or ordinary negligence, or was a good faith error in judgment or discretion. The employer has not met its burden to show disqualifying misconduct. Cosper, supra. Based upon the evidence provided, the claimant's actions were not misconduct within the meaning of the statute, and the claimant is not disqualified from benefits.

The final issue is whether the employer's account is subject to charge. An employer's account is only chargeable if the employer is a base period employer. Iowa Code §96.7. The base period is "the period beginning with the first day of the five completed calendar quarters immediately preceding the first day of an individual's benefit year and ending with the last day of the next to the last completed calendar quarter immediately preceding the date on which the individual filed a valid claim." Iowa Code §96.19-3. The claimant's base period began July 1, 2004 and ended June 30, 2005. The employer did not employ the claimant during this time, and therefore the employer is not currently a base period employer and its account is not currently chargeable for benefits paid to the claimant.

DECISION:

The representative's January 10, 2006 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The employer did discharge the claimant but not for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits, if she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account is not subject to charge in the current benefit year.

ld/s