

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

FRANCISCO FERNANDES
Claimant

**NORWALK COMMUNITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT**
Employer

APPEAL 20A-UI-10071-J1-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 03/15/20
Claimant: Appellant (2)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On August 24, 2020, the claimant filed an appeal from the August 17, 2020, (reference 04) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based on job-related misconduct. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on October 1, 2020. Claimant participated. Employer did not participate.

ISSUE:

Did claimant commit job-related misconduct that disqualifies claimant from unemployment insurance benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant began working for the Des Moines Community School District for about 26 years. Claimant was let go by the Des Moines Community School District for an infraction. Claimant had his license to teach suspended for three months. Claimant's license was reinstated. Claimant did not teach while he was on temporary suspension. Claimant then began working as a substitute teacher for the Norwalk Community School District and two other school districts. The employer terminated claimant on February 4, 2020. The employer did not provide evidence at the hearing that committed any misconduct at work or misled the employer.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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 disqualification shall continue 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).

The employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for job-related misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The question is not whether the employer made the correct decision in ending claimant's employment, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). Misconduct justifying termination of an employee and misconduct warranting denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two different things. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Id.* Negligence is not misconduct unless recurrent in nature; a single act is not disqualifying unless indicative of a deliberate disregard of the employer's interests. *Henry v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 391 N.W.2d 731 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Because our unemployment compensation law is designed to protect workers from financial hardships when they become unemployed through no fault of their own, we construe the provisions "liberally to carry out its humane and beneficial purpose." *Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 570 N.W.2d 85, 96 (Iowa 1997). "[C]ode provisions which operate to work

a forfeiture of benefits are strongly construed in favor of the claimant." *Diggs v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 478 N.W.2d 432, 434 (Iowa Ct. App. 1991).

The employer has not proven the claimant committed job-related misconduct. I find claimant has not committed job-related misconduct.

DECISION:

Regular Unemployment Insurance Benefits Under State Law

The August 17, 2020, (reference 04) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Benefits are payable, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.



James F. Elliott
Administrative Law Judge

October 2, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

je/sam