

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

ELAF M ABDELGADIR
Claimant

REMEDY INTELLIGENT STAFFING INC
Employer

APPEAL 23A-UI-09957-DZ-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 09/10/23
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Remedy Intelligent Staffing Inc, the employer/appellant,¹ appealed the Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) October 9, 2023 (reference 02) unemployment insurance (UI) decision. IWD found Ms. Abdelgadir eligible for REGULAR (state) UI benefits because IWD concluded the employer dismissed her from work on September 7, 2023 for a reason that did not disqualify her from receiving UI benefits. On October 25, 2023 the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing (DIAL), UI Appeals Bureau mailed a notice of hearing to the employer and Ms. Abdelgadir for a telephone hearing scheduled for November 6, 2023.

The undersigned administrative law judge held a telephone hearing on November 6, 2023. The employer participated in the hearing through Dawn Starr, branch manager. Ms. Abdelgadir did not participate in the hearing. The undersigned took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Did the employer discharge Ms. Abdelgadir from employment for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

Did IWD overpay Ms. Abdelgadir UI benefits?

If so, should he repay the benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Ms. Abdelgadir began working for the employer, temporary staffing agency, in June 2023. The employer assigned her to work at General Mills as a field associate/material handler. Her employment ended on September 7, 2023.

On September 7, co-workers reported to the employer's on-site supervisor that Ms. Abdelgadir was sleeping at her workstation. The on-site supervisor woke up Ms. Abdelgadir. Later, the on-site supervisor observed Ms. Abdelgadir sleeping at her workstation. Ms. Abdelgadir explained that she was tired. General Mills sent Ms. Abdelgadir home and the on-site supervisor reported the incident to the employer's home office. The employer's policy prohibits sleeping on the job

¹ Appellant is the person or employer who appealed.

and provides that employer will terminate the employment of employees who do so. The employer gave Ms. Abdelgadir a copy of the policy on, or about, her hire date. Later that day, Ms. Starr contacted Ms. Abdelgadir and terminated her employment for sleeping on the job.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the undersigned concludes the employer discharged Ms. Abdelgadir from employment for a reason that does not disqualify her from receiving UI benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)(a) and (d) provide, in relevant part:

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.

d. For the purposes of this subsection, "misconduct" means a deliberate act or omission by an employee that constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of the employee's contract of employment. Misconduct is 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.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct.² The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating the claimant from employment, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits.³ Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits.⁴

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, it incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation of the employer's policy or rule is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy.

Sleeping on the job can be disqualifying misconduct. An employer can reasonably expect that an employee will be working when scheduled. But the analysis in this type of case focuses on the voluntariness of the employee's conduct. For example, a person who nods off at work after

² *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

³ *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984).

⁴ *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984).

taking a cold pill likely has not committed an act of misconduct. But a person who has made some effort to try to hide their sleeping from the employer likely has committed an act of misconduct.

In this case, the employer has not established misconduct on the part of Ms. Abdelgadir. The employer has a reasonable work rule that prohibits employees from sleeping while on work time. Ms. Abdelgadir violated this rule, but the employer has failed to prove that her violation was intentional. Here, Ms. Abdelgadir was negligent but not to “such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design” such that it could accurately be called misconduct.⁵ The employer has not established disqualifying, job-related misconduct, and Ms. Abdelgadir is eligible for UI benefits.

Since Ms. Abdelgadir is eligible for REGULAR (state) UI benefits per this decision, the issues of overpayment and repayment are moot. An issue being moot means there is nothing left to decide.⁶

DECISION:

The October 9, 2023 (reference 02) UI decision is AFFIRMED. The employer discharged Ms. Abdelgadir from employment for a reason that does not disqualify her from receiving UI benefits. Ms. Abdelgadir is eligible for UI benefits, as long as no other decision denies her UI benefits.



Daniel Zeno
Administrative Law Judge

November 7, 2023
Decision Dated and Mailed

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⁵ Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)(a); *Greenwell v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, No. 15-0154 (Iowa Ct. App. Mar. 23, 2016).

⁶ *Iowa Bankers Ass'n v. Iowa Credit Union Dep't*, 335 N.W.2d 439, 442 (Iowa 1983).

APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with this 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
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
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> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

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
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
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 adquiera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que se encuentra en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> o comunicándose con el Tribunal de Distrito Secretario del tribunal <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

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.