

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

MICHELLE L HORTON
Claimant

APPEAL 18A-UI-09300-NM-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WEST DES MOINES COMMUNITY SCH DIS
Employer

OC: 07/22/18
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the August 9, 2018, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon her voluntary quit. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on September 25, 2018. Claimant participated and testified. Employer participated through Director of Human Resources Josie Lewis. Department's Exhibit D-1, claimant's Exhibits A and B, and employer's Exhibit 1 were all received into evidence.

ISSUES:

Is the appeal timely?

Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant began working for employer on August 31, 2017. Claimant last worked as a full-time Spanish teacher. Claimant was separated from employment on June 5, 2018, when she voluntarily quit. In November 2017, claimant's husband retired from the military. Claimant submitted documentation outlining the terms upon which the military would cover moving expenses following her husband's retirement. (Exhibit A). Around the same time, claimant's husband accepted employment in the private sector. (Exhibit B). The two decided they would move to California. On February 15, 2018, claimant submitted a resignation letter to the employer. (Exhibit 1). The letter indicated claimant's resignation would be effective at the end of the school year. Had claimant not resigned, work would have continued to be available to her.

A disqualifying unemployment insurance decision was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record on August 9, 2018. Claimant testified she was having problems with receiving her mail at this time. Claimant initially testified she believed she received the decision approximately ten days after it was mailed, but later changed her testimony to indicate she had

received the letter the day she filed her appeal, September 6, 2018. The appeal deadline was August 20, 2018.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's appeal is untimely.

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of § 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to § 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving § 96.5, subsection 10, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to § 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving § 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding § 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Bd. of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377

(Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

Claimant initially testified she received the decision letter approximately ten days after it was mailed. Upon hearing the date on which she filed her appeal, claimant changed her testimony to indicate she received the decision on September 6, 2018, the same day she filed her appeal. Claimant's inconsistent testimony presents serious issues with her credibility on this issue. The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

Even if claimant's appeal were timely, the administrative law judge concludes claimant's separation from the employment was without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code section 96.5(1) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25 provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code section 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(2) The claimant moved to a different locality.

Iowa Code section 96.5(1)b provides:

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

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department. But the individual shall not be disqualified if the department finds that:

b. The individual's leaving was caused by the relocation of the individual's spouse by the military. The employer's account shall not be charged for any benefits paid to an individual who leaves due to the relocation of a military spouse. Relief of charges under this paragraph applies to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

Claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code § 96.6(2). "Good cause" for leaving employment must be that which is reasonable to the average person, not the overly sensitive individual or the claimant in particular. *Uniweld Products v. Indus. Relations Comm'n*, 277 So.2d 827 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 1973). A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980).

Claimant contends she moved due to a relocation of her spouse by the military. However, the documents provided by the claimant appear to outline terms for the military covering moving expenses upon the retirement of the claimant's spouse, as a military benefit, rather than a required relocation to another area for the purpose of military service. In other words, it appears claimant chose to relocate with her husband following his retirement in order for him to pursue a career in the private sector. This move appears to be voluntary, rather than at the direction of the U.S. military, though the military's guidelines for covering moving expenses may have factored into this decision. While claimant's leaving may have been based upon good personal reasons, it was not for a good-cause reason attributable to the employer according to Iowa law. Benefits are denied.

DECISION:

The August 9, 2018, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The appeal is not timely. Even if the appeal were timely, the claimant voluntarily left her employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible.

Nicole Merrill
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

nm/rvs