

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

MAKAYLA D FAIRBANKS
Claimant

APPEAL 20A-UI-07168-AD-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

OC: 01/12/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Filing – Timely Appeal
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35 – Filing

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On June 28, 2020, Makayla Fairbanks (claimant/appellant) filed an appeal from the March 13, 2020 (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits.

A telephone hearing was held on August 4, 2020. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. Claimant participated personally. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

ISSUE(S):

- I. Is the appeal timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

The Unemployment Insurance Decision was mailed to claimant at the above address on or about March 13, 2020. That was claimant's correct address on that date. Claimant was unable to state with any specificity when she received the decision.

The decision states that it becomes final unless an appeal is postmarked or received by Iowa Workforce Development Appeals Section by March 23, 2020. However, if the due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday, the appeal period is extended to the next working day. Claimant appealed the decision online via email on June 28, 2020.

Claimant did not initially appeal the decision because her phone and internet were disconnected in March. They were not reconnected until on or about June 28, when she filed the appeal via email. Claimant testified that she was unable to find an alternate way to contact the department to appeal the decision during that approximately three-month period. This was due in part to the pandemic and claimant taking precautions due to her health. Other ways to contact the department include but are not limited to sending a letter; sending a fax; borrowing a friend or family member's phone or computer to send an email; or finding a place with public access to send an email.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part: “[u]nless 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.”

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(1)(a) provides:

1. Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:
 - (a) If transmitted via the United States Postal Service on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark, or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark on the envelope in which it is received; or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion.
 - (b)
 - (c) If transmitted by any means other than [United States Postal Service or the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES)], on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

2. The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

There is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and the Administrative Law Judge has no authority to change the decision of representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). The ten-day period for appealing an initial determination concerning a claim for benefits has been described as jurisdictional. *Messina v. Iowa Dept. of Job Service*, 341 N.W.2d 52, 55 (Iowa 1983); *Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The only basis for changing the ten-day period would be where notice to the appealing party was constitutionally invalid. *E.g. Beardslee v. Iowa Dept. Job Service*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979). The question in such cases becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Employment Sec. Commission*, 212 N.W.2d 471 (Iowa 1973). The question of whether the Claimant has been denied a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal is also informed by rule 871-24.35(2) which states that “the submission of any ...appeal...not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.”

The administrative law judge does not find credible claimant's testimony that she was unable to find an alternate way to appeal the decision for an approximately three-month period. Even with

the pandemic and with claimant taking prudent precautions, it is not believable that it was simply not possible for claimant to perfect an appeal prior to June 28, 2020. Claimant has failed to establish a good cause reason for the approximately three-month delay in appealing and the appeal is therefore untimely.

Because the appeal is untimely, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. The underlying decision denying benefits therefore remains in full force. The appeal is dismissed.

DECISION:

The claimant's appeal was not timely. The administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of the representative. The March 13, 2020 (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision denying benefits therefore remains in force.



Andrew B. Duffelmeyer
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax (515) 478-3528

August 17, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

abd/mh

Note to Claimant:

If you disagree with this decision, you may file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. If this decision denies benefits, you may be responsible for paying back benefits already received.

Individuals who are disqualified from or are otherwise ineligible for **regular** unemployment insurance benefits but who are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.