

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

JESTIN M LAIR

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-02906-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

STREAM INTERNATIONAL INC

Employer

OC: 01/22/12

Claimant: Respondent (2-R)

Section 96.5(2)(a) – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the March 13, 2012, reference 03, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on April 6, 2012. Claimant Jestin Lair did not respond to the hearing notice instructions to provide a telephone number for the hearing and did not participate. Staci Albert represented the employer and presented additional testimony through Nora Cumming and Mike Saunders. Exhibits One through Eight were received into evidence.

ISSUE:

Whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment that disqualifies the claimant for unemployment insurance benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The employer contracts with client business to provide customer support services. Jestin Lair was employed by Stream International, Inc., as a part-time customer support professional from July 2011 until January 25, 2012, when the employer discharged him from the employment for poor work performance. Mr. Lair's duties involved handling inbound customer calls. The customers could be calling to order a product or to have a complaint resolved. Mr. Lair was required to generate appropriate documentation concerning the customer's call. Such documentation would be necessary if Mr. Lair or another worker needed to follow up on something related to the call. Mr. Lair had been properly trained on generating the required documentation, but regularly failed to generate appropriate documentation pertaining to calls.

The employer expected a 90 percent compliance rate for the documentation requirement. As of October 9, 2011, Mr. Lair's compliance rate was 39.4 percent. As of October 25, Mr. Lair's compliance rate was 40.4 percent. On October 31, the employer issued a written warning to Mr. Lair regarding his failure to consistently generate the required documentation. As of December 5, Mr. Lair's compliance rate was 63.2 percent. For the month of December, Mr. Lair's compliance rate was 75.3. As of January 24, 2012, Mr. Lair's compliance rate was 74.2. At the time the employer issued the various reprimands for Mr. Lair's failure to properly document calls, Mr. Lair would acknowledge the obligation and tell the employer that he did not document consistently because he was lazy.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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.

The employer has the burden of proof in this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

Mr. Lair did not participate in the hearing. Thus, the available evidence is limited to that presented by the employer. The weight of the evidence in the record establishes that Mr. Lair had the ability to perform the work in the expected manner but elected not to do so even after repeated warnings from the employer. The weight of the evidence establishes a pattern of negligence or carelessness indicating a willful disregard of the employer's interests. Mr. Lair was discharged for misconduct. Accordingly, Mr. Lair is disqualified for benefits until he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account shall not be charged for benefits paid to Mr. Lair.

Iowa Code section 96.3(7) provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. The overpayment recovery law was updated in 2008. See Iowa Code section 96.3(7)(b). Under the revised law, a claimant will not be required to repay an overpayment of benefits if all of the following factors are met. First, the prior award of benefits must have been made in connection with a decision regarding the claimant's separation from a particular employment. Second, the claimant must not have engaged in fraud or willful misrepresentation to obtain the benefits or in connection with the Agency's initial decision to award benefits. Third, the employer must not have participated at the initial fact-finding proceeding that resulted in the initial decision to award benefits. If Workforce Development determines there has been an overpayment of benefits, the employer will not be charged for the benefits, regardless of whether the claimant is required to repay the benefits.

Because the claimant has been deemed ineligible for benefits, any benefits the claimant has received would constitute an overpayment. Accordingly, the administrative law judge will remand the matter to the Claims Division for determination of whether there has been an overpayment, the amount of the overpayment, and whether the claimant will have to repay the benefits.

DECISION:

The Agency representative's March 13, 2012, reference 03, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged for misconduct. The claimant is disqualified for unemployment benefits until he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit allowance, provided he meets all other eligibility requirements. The employer's account will not be charged.

This matter is remanded to the Claims Division for determination of whether there has been an overpayment, the amount of the overpayment, and whether the claimant will have to repay the benefits.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/kjw