

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

BRITTANY A MCKNIGHT
Claimant

APPEAL 22A-UI-06445-DB-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

GEATER MACHINING & MANUFACTURING
Employer

**OC: 01/23/22
Claimant: Appellant (6)**

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Able to and Available for Work
Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The appellant filed an appeal from the March 2, 2022 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that concluded that claimant was not eligible for benefits. A notice of hearing was mailed to the appellant's last known address of record for a telephone hearing scheduled for April 22, 2022. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the appellant failed to call the toll-free number listed on the hearing notice to participate in the scheduled hearing. Because the appellant failed to follow the instructions on the notice of hearing, no hearing was held.

ISSUE:

Should the appeal be dismissed based on the appellant's failure to appear and participate?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The appellant was properly notified of the scheduled hearing for this appeal. The appellant failed to call in to participate in the scheduled hearing, as required by the hearing notice. The appellant did not request a postponement of the hearing before the hearing date. Official notice of the Clear2there hearing control screen is taken to establish that appellant did not call or register online with the Appeals Bureau to participate in the hearing at the date and time the hearing was scheduled. The appellant did not call in before the record was closed.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties as follows:

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

YOU MUST CALL the toll-free number: 866-783-7021 at the time of the hearing. When instructed, enter the PIN Number ... followed by the pound key [#] and wait for the administrative law judge to begin the hearing. The administrative law judge **WILL NOT** call you for the hearing, you **MUST** call into the number provided above to participate. **Failure to participate in the hearing may result in the dismissal of your appeal.**

The hearing notice lists the hearing date and time. The back page of the hearing notice provides further warning stating “You must call the toll-free number on the front of this notice at the time of the hearing to participate.”

The record was left open for a period after the initial hearing start time to give the appellant a *reasonable* opportunity to participate. Holding the appellant in default for failure to appear and participate during the grace period after the hearing start time is entirely reasonable considering the time allocated for unemployment hearings. The March 2, 2022 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision had concluded the claimant was not eligible for benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides that if a party fails to appear or participate in a hearing after proper service of notice, the judge may enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party.

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7) provides in pertinent part:

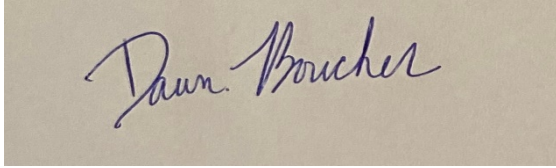
If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provide in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request in writing to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to the parties. The appellant is responsible for going forward with the case in a prompt and thoughtful manner. The appellant must be present at the start of the hearing to avoid a default judgment. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7). The hearing notice instructs the parties to call the toll-free number on the front of the notice at the time of the hearing to participate.

The Iowa Supreme Court has held a default should not be set aside due to the appellant's negligence, carelessness, or inattention. See *Houlihan v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 545 N.W.2d 863 (Iowa 1996). Similarly, a default should not be set aside because the appellant has ignored clear requirements in the rules. Rather, a party must show it intended to proceed with the appeal and took steps to do so, but failed to appear because of some misunderstanding, accident, mistake or excusable neglect. The appellant was not present at the start of the hearing or during the grace period prior to the record being closed. The representative's decision remains in force and effect.

DECISION:

The March 2, 2022 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision remains in effect as the appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed.

A rectangular area containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dawn Boucher".

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

April 26, 2022
Decision Dated and Mailed

db/db