

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MATTHEW J SZERENCSE
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-02172-S2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

HY-VEE INC
Employer

OC: 01/09/11
Claimant: Respondent (2/R)

Section 96.5-1-d – Voluntary Quit for Medical Reasons
Section 96.3-7 – Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Hy-Vee (employer) appealed a representative's February 15, 2011 decision (reference 01) that concluded Matthew Szerencse (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for March 22, 2011. The claimant participated personally. The employer was represented by Alice Rose Thatch, employer representative, and participated by Natalie McGee, director of human resources, and Bret Seufferer.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant is denied unemployment insurance benefits because he voluntarily quit work without good cause attributable to the employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and having considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on November 30, 2007, as a part-time warehouse order picker. He suffered a non-work-related injury to his ankles in 2009. On March 22, 2010, he suffered from a work-related aggravation of that injury. The employer sent the claimant to the physician the claimant chose in 2009. The claimant was restricted from working from March 31 to May 10, 2010. He returned to light duty work from May 13 through August 11, 2010. In a letter dated August 9, 2010, his physician stated that the claimant had recovered from the work-related aggravation. Any continuing medical issues were due solely to the non-work-related injury in 2009.

The claimant did not work after August 11, 2010. On August 25, 2010, the claimant saw his physician, who placed him on restrictions for four weeks. The employer did not hear from the claimant until January 7, 2011. The claimant called the employer asking for work but did not supply the employer with a release from a physician. No work was available.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant voluntarily quit work without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code section 96.5-1-d 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. But the individual shall not be disqualified if the department finds that:

d. The individual left employment because of illness, injury or pregnancy upon the advice of a licensed and practicing physician, and upon knowledge of the necessity for absence immediately notified the employer, or the employer consented to the absence, and after recovering from the illness, injury or pregnancy, when recovery was certified by a licensed and practicing physician, the individual returned to the employer and offered to perform services and the individual's regular work or comparable suitable work was not available, if so found by the department, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

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). A claimant is not disqualified for leaving employment if he or she (1) left employment by reason of illness, injury, or pregnancy; (2) on the advice of a licensed and practicing physician; (3) and immediately notified the employer or the employer consented to the absence; (4) and when certified as recovered by a physician, the individual returned to the employer and offered services but the regular or comparable suitable work was not available. Area Residential Care, Inc. v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 323 N.W.2d 257 (Iowa 1982).

The claimant left work due to an injury under the advice of his physician after August 11, 2010. The employer consented to his leaving. The claimant has failed to provide the employer with certification that he has recovered. The claimant has failed to meet the requirements of the statute and, therefore, is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits

were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

The claimant has received benefits since filing the claim herein. Pursuant to this decision, those benefits may now constitute an overpayment. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

DECISION:

The representative's February 15, 2011 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The claimant voluntarily left work without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/kjw