

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

JORDAN J POWERS

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 10A-UI-14572-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

FIELDHOUSE CO INC

CEDAR RAPIDS FIELDHOUSE INC

Employer

OC: 08/22/10

Claimant: Respondent (2/R)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge

Section 96.3-7 – Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Fieldhouse Company, Inc. / Cedar Rapids Fieldhouse, Inc. (employer) appealed a representative's October 13, 2010 decision (reference 01) that concluded Jordan J. Powers (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on December 7, 2010. The claimant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. Darby Haase appeared on the employer's behalf. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the employer, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for work-connected misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The employer or related entities operate three restaurant locations, one in Iowa City, and two in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa area. As of the date of the hearing, it was unclear as to under which of the affiliated account numbers the claimant's wages were being reported. The claimant started working for the employer at the Blairs Ferry, Cedar Rapids location on March 29, 2010. He worked part time (up to 40 hours per week) as a kitchen worker/cook. His last day of work was on or about August 19, 2010. The employer discharged him on August 20, 2010. The reason asserted for the discharge was excessive absenteeism.

The claimant had been given two prior write ups for attendance, one on June 20 for being three and a half hours late, no reason given, and the other on August 8 for lack of dependability and calling off work without adequate notice. On August 20 the claimant was scheduled for work at 4:00 p.m. At 3:54 p.m. his girlfriend called the employer to report he would be absent because of having a hangover from the prior night. Because of the repeated late notice of the absence

and failure to find someone to cover his shift on his own given the late notice, the employer determined to discharge the claimant.

The claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective August 22, 2010. The claimant has received unemployment insurance benefits after the separation.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982); Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

In order to establish misconduct such as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa App. 1986). The conduct must show a 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. 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; Huntoon, supra; Henry, supra. In contrast, 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. 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; Huntoon, supra; Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984).

Absenteeism can constitute misconduct; however, to be misconduct, absences must be both excessive and unexcused. 871 IAC 24.32(7). The claimant's final absence was not excused and was not due to a properly reported bona fide illness or other reasonable grounds. The claimant had previously been warned that future absences could result in termination. Higgins v. IDJS, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). The employer discharged the claimant for reasons amounting to work-connected misconduct.

The unemployment insurance law 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. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. The employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3-7. In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was ineligible for those benefits. The matter of determining the amount of the overpayment and whether the claimant is eligible for a waiver of overpayment under Iowa Code § 96.3-7-b is remanded the Claims Section.

DECISION:

The representative's October 13, 2010 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The employer discharged the claimant for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits as of August 20, 2010. This disqualification continues until he has been paid ten times his weekly benefit amount for insured work, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account will not be charged. The matter is remanded to the Claims Section for investigation and determination of the overpayment issue.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/css