

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

CHRISTOPHER M INGRAM
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-09070-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
Employer

OC: 06/12/11
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(7) – Vacation Pay

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the July 1, 2011 (reference 03) decision that deducted vacation pay from benefits without having held a fact-finding interview pursuant to 871 IAC 24.9(2)b. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on August 3, 2011. Claimant participated. Employer participated through benefits specialist Mary Eggenburg. Employer's Exhibit 1 was admitted to the record. Employer's Exhibit 1 was admitted to the record.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant received vacation pay at separation, if that amount is deductible from benefits, and if so, for what period.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was separated on May 4, 2011, and received pay for accumulated but unused vacation time in the amount of \$127.50, equivalent to 10.75 hours, based upon a rate of pay at \$141.86 per hour. He reported \$141.00 in wages for the week ending May 7, 2011 and was paid \$64.00 in partial benefits. He was unaware he would be paid accumulated but unused vacation pay, which was not paid until July 1, 2011. The employer did designate the period of time to which the vacation pay was to be applied. Claimant's weekly benefit amount (WBA) is \$164.00.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the vacation pay was deducted for the correct period.

Iowa Code § 96.5-7 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits: ...

7. Vacation pay.

a. When an employer makes a payment or becomes obligated to make a payment to an individual for vacation pay, or for vacation pay allowance, or as pay in lieu of vacation, such payment or amount shall be deemed "wages" as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, and shall be applied as provided in paragraph "c" hereof.

b. When, in connection with a separation or layoff of an individual, the individual's employer makes a payment or payments to the individual, or becomes obligated to make a payment to the individual as, or in the nature of, vacation pay, or vacation pay allowance, or as pay in lieu of vacation, and within ten calendar days after notification of the filing of the individual's claim, designates by notice in writing to the department the period to which the payment shall be allocated; provided, that if such designated period is extended by the employer, the individual may again similarly designate an extended period, by giving notice in writing to the department not later than the beginning of the extension of the period, with the same effect as if the period of extension were included in the original designation. The amount of a payment or obligation to make payment, is deemed "wages" as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, and shall be applied as provided in paragraph "c" of this subsection 7.

c. Of the wages described in paragraph "a" (whether or not the employer has designated the period therein described), or of the wages described in paragraph "b", if the period therein described has been designated by the employer as therein provided, a sum equal to the wages of such individual for a normal workday shall be attributed to, or deemed to be payable to the individual with respect to, the first and each subsequent workday in such period until such amount so paid or owing is exhausted. Any individual receiving or entitled to receive wages as provided herein shall be ineligible for benefits for any week in which the sums, so designated or attributed to such normal workdays, equal or exceed the individual's weekly benefit amount. If the amount so designated or attributed as wages is less than the weekly benefit amount of such individual, the individual's benefits shall be reduced by such amount.

d. Notwithstanding contrary provisions in paragraphs "a", "b", and "c", if an individual is separated from employment and is scheduled to receive vacation payments during the period of unemployment attributable to the employer and if the employer does not designate the vacation period pursuant to paragraph "b", then payments made by the employer to the individual or an obligation to make a payment by the employer to the individual for vacation pay, vacation pay allowance or pay in lieu of vacation shall not be deemed wages as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, for any period in excess of one week and such payments or the value of such obligations shall not be deducted for any period in excess of one week from the unemployment benefits the individual is otherwise entitled to receive under this chapter. However, if the employer designates more than one week as the vacation period pursuant to paragraph "b", the vacation pay, vacation pay allowance, or pay in lieu of vacation shall be considered wages and shall be deducted from benefits.

e. If an employer pays or is obligated to pay a bonus to an individual at the same time the employer pays or is obligated to pay vacation pay, a vacation pay allowance, or pay in lieu of vacation, the bonus shall not be deemed wages for purposes of determining benefit eligibility and amount, and the bonus shall not be deducted from unemployment benefits the individual is otherwise entitled to receive under this chapter.

The general policy underlying the deductibility of "vacation pay" from benefit eligibility is "that even though one is unemployed during certain weeks, he or she is not entitled to unemployment benefits for weeks if receiving or having received vacation pay therefor." *Lefebure Corp. v. Iowa Dept. of Job Service*, 341 N.W.2d 768, 771 (Iowa 1983); see also, 14 A.L.R.4th 1175 § 2(a) (1982). Thus, "vacation pay" is deductible because it is considered a form of "wage," which the statute further defines as any "remuneration for personal services . . ." Iowa Code § 96.19(41). The purpose behind all the deductible payment provisions of the unemployment law is to prevent claimants from receiving benefits for any week or portion thereof in which they are also receiving a wage substitute payment from their employer. The law allows employers to designate the period of time to which a lump sum payment is allocated so that claimants have to exhaust their wage substitute payments before drawing benefits. Because the employer did designate a time period to which the vacation pay is to apply and the calculation was correct, the entire amount was correctly deducted from the first week of benefits following the separation.

Gross wages (wages + vacation pay) \$141.00 + \$128.00 (\$127.50 rounded up) = \$269.00 – (25 percent of \$164.00 WBA = \$41) = \$228.00 deduction from WBA.

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b. When, in connection with a separation or layoff of an individual, the individual's employer makes a payment or payments to the individual, or becomes obligated to make a payment to the individual as, or in the nature of, vacation pay, or vacation pay allowance, or as pay in lieu of vacation, and within ten calendar days after notification of the filing of the individual's claim, designates by notice in writing to the department the period to which the payment shall be allocated; provided, that if such designated period is extended by the employer, the individual may again similarly designate an extended period, by giving notice in writing to the department not later than the beginning of the extension of the period, with the same effect as if the period of extension were included in the original designation. The amount of a payment or obligation to make payment, is deemed "wages" as defined in section 96.19, subsection 41, and shall be applied as provided in paragraph "c" of this subsection 7.

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Since the deduction is larger than the WBA, the claimant is not entitled to benefits for the week. Because he was paid \$64.00 to which he was not entitled, those benefits must be recovered.

Iowa Code § 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 administrative law judge concludes that the claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$64.00 as stated by the representative's decision.

DECISION:

The July 11, 2011 (reference 03) decision is affirmed. The vacation pay was deducted for the correct period.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/css