

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**PAULA J STEWARD**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-14706-S2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**MERCY MEDICAL CENTER**  
Employer

**OC: 10/16/11**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Paula Steward (claimant) appealed a representative's November 4, 2011 decision (reference 01) that concluded she was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because she was discharged from work with Mercy Medical Center (employer) for conduct not in the best interest of the employer. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for December 6, 2011. The claimant was represented by Todd Becker, Attorney at Law, and participated personally. The employer provided a telephone number but could not be reached at the time of the hearing. The administrative law judge left a message on an answering machine that identified itself as belonging to the witness. The witness did not contact the administrative law judge before the end of the hearing.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on June 14, 2004, as a full-time department secretary. The employer did not issue her a handbook. On April 5, 2011, the employer issued the claimant a written warning for being rude to an employee of a physician's office. The claimant had not been rude. On October 12, 2011, the employer terminated the claimant because a patient complained about the claimant. The claimant was not rude to the patient. The patient wanted a time for an appointment that was not available.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not discharged for misconduct.

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 establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). The employer did not participate in the hearing and, therefore, provided no evidence of job-related misconduct. The employer did not meet its burden of proof to show misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The representative's November 4, 2011 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The employer has not met its proof to establish job-related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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