

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**DOUGLAS BOUZA**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 10A-UI-07180-BT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**HEARTLAND EXPRESS INC OF IOWA**

Employer

**OC: 04/11/10**

**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5-1-d - Voluntary Leaving/Illness or Injury  
871 IAC 24.25(35) - Separation Due to Illness or Injury

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Douglas Bouza (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated May 5, 2010, reference 01, which held that he was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because he voluntarily quit work with Heartland Express Inc. of Iowa (employer) without good cause attributable to the employer. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on July 6, 2010. The claimant participated in the hearing with his step-daughter Sheri Mason. The employer participated through Lea Peters, Human Resources Generalist. Claimant's Exhibits A and B were admitted into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the claimant's voluntary separation from employment qualifies him to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

**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 employed as a full-time over-the-road truck driver from February 21, 2001 through December 3, 2009. His physician took him off work on December 3, 2009 due to a non-work-related medical condition. The claimant requested and was approved for leave under the Family Medical Leave Act from December 3, 2009 through January 29, 2010. He had previously used some of his FMLA earlier in 2009 so only had 58 days remaining.

The claimant was still under his physician's care at the time his leave was exhausted but he was unable to return to work. The employer considered that the claimant voluntarily quit his employment as of February 2, 2010. The claimant was released with restrictions on April 6, 2010 but has not received a complete release.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue to be determined is whether the reasons for the claimant's separation from employment qualify him to receive unemployment insurance benefits. The claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if he voluntarily quit without good cause attributable to the employer or if the employer discharged him for work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code §§ 96.5-1 and 96.5-2-a. The claimant left his employment on December 3, 2009 due to a non-work-related medical condition. He contends he was discharged but the employer never advised him he could not return to work.

Iowa Code § 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.

871 IAC 24.25(35) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code § 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(35) The claimant left because of illness or injury which was not caused or aggravated by the employment or pregnancy and failed to:

- (a) Obtain the advice of a licensed and practicing physician;
- (b) Obtain certification of release for work from a licensed and practicing physician;
- (c) Return to the employer and offer services upon recovery and certification for work by a licensed and practicing physician; or
- (d) Fully recover so that the claimant could perform all of the duties of the job.

The claimant went on a medical leave of absence due to a non-work-related illness. He would only be eligible for benefits if his position were not available to him after his recovery. A "recovery" under Iowa Code § 96.5-1-d means a complete recovery without restriction. White v.

Employment Appeal Board, 487 N.W.2d 342, 345 (Iowa 1992) (citing Hedges v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 368 N.W.2d 862, 867 (Iowa App. 1985)). The claimant has not been released to return to full work duties. Accordingly, the separation is without good cause attributable to the employer and benefits must be denied.

**DECISION:**

The unemployment insurance decision dated May 5, 2010, reference 01, is affirmed. The claimant voluntarily left work without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until he has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible.

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Susan D. Ackerman  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/pjs