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At the time of the discharge employer asked Claimant why she had not disclosed information about her past medical history. Employer hired an interpreter whose native language is Lao to assist with its questions. Lao and Thai are mutually intelligible, similar to American English and British English. During the meeting the Claimant admitted that she didn't answer truthfully on the form because she needed the job and felt she would not be hired if she answered truthfully.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Legal Standard:

Iowa Code Section 96.5(2)(a) (2017) provides:

Discharge for Misconduct. If the department finds the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and been paid wages for the insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

The Division of Job Service defines misconduct at 871 IAC 24.32(1)(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 the 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.

"This is the meaning which has been given the term in other jurisdictions under similar statutes, and we believe it accurately reflects the intent of the legislature." *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d, 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment

compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. *Lee v. Employment Appeal Board*, 616 NW2d 661 (Iowa 2000).

The Department rules provide that “[w]hen a willfully and deliberately false statement is made on an Application for Work form, and this willful and deliberate falsification does or could result in endangering the health, safety or morals of the applicant or others, or result in exposing the employer to legal liabilities or penalties, or result in placing the employer in jeopardy, such falsification shall be an act of misconduct in connection with the employer.” 871 IAC 24.32(6). The questions we must answer in terms of rule 24.32(6) are whether the Claimant engaged in deliberate falsification and whether that falsification placed the Employer in jeopardy.

Analysis:

It is the duty of the Board as the ultimate trier of fact in this case, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007). The Board, as the finder of fact, may believe all, part or none of any witness’s testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, as well as the weight to give other evidence, a Board member should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In determining the facts, and deciding what evidence to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other evidence the Board believes; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness’s conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness’s interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). The Board also gives weight to the opinion of the Administrative Law Judge concerning credibility and weight of evidence, particularly where the hearing is in-person, although the Board is not bound by that opinion. Iowa Code §17A.10(3); *Iowa State Fairgrounds Security v. Iowa Civil Rights Commission*, 322 N.W.2d 293, 294 (Iowa 1982). The findings of fact show how we have resolved the disputed factual issues in this case. We have carefully weighed the credibility of the witnesses and the reliability of the evidence considering the applicable factors listed above, and the Board’s collective common sense and experience. We find the Claimant’s explanation for the inaccuracies on the questionnaire are not credible. We take into account first that the Claimant has been in the country ten years and was helped by her husband who is a native speaker in filling out the form. When we add this to the Claimant’s admission made to the employer at their meeting, we find the Claimant’s current denials not credible. On balance we find that the Claimant did intentionally falsify the questionnaire, because she needed the work, and find incredible that the inaccuracy was the result of lack of understanding.

Turning to the rule, we have found willful falsification. The Claimant knew of her own health history, and she purposely chose not to include it because she was worried she wouldn’t get hired. Her choice was an intentional one and was *not* the product of a good faith misunderstanding about what was being asked. A willfully and deliberately false statement has been proved.

The next issue is jeopardy to the Employer. An inaccurate health history, of course, may result in an employee performing job duties which the Employer may otherwise not have assigned them. So, if you have a history of back problems you may not be assigned to do as much lifting. Or if you have tendonitis the Employer may choose to isolate you from repetitive use of the joints in question. By failing to disclose

her history the Claimant made it more likely that she would be injured on the job. This is exactly the sort of “endangering [of] the health, [or] safety ... of the applicant” contemplated by the rule on misconduct by falsification. 871 IAC 24.32(6). We thus conclude that the Claimant intentionally falsified her health history form and endangered her health or safety as a result.

Additional Evidence:

The Employer submitted additional evidence to the Board which was not contained in the administrative file and which was not submitted to the administrative law judge. While the additional evidence was reviewed for the purposes of determining whether admission of the evidence was warranted despite it not being presented at hearing, the Employment Appeal Board, in its discretion, finds that the admission of the additional evidence is not warranted in reaching today’s decision. There is no sufficient cause why the new and additional information submitted by the Employer was not presented at hearing. Accordingly none of the new and additional information submitted has been relied upon in making our decision, and none of it has received any weight whatsoever, but rather all of it has been wholly disregarded.

No Overpayment:

Finally, since the Administrative Law Judge allowed benefits and in so doing affirmed a decision of the claims representative the Claimant falls under the double affirmance rule:

871 IAC 23.43(3) Rule of two affirmances.

a. Whenever an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative or the employment appeal board of the Iowa department of inspections and appeals affirms the decision of an administrative law judge, allowing payment of benefits, such benefits shall be paid regardless of any further appeal.

b. However, if the decision is subsequently reversed by higher authority:

- (1) The protesting employer involved shall have all charges removed for all payments made on such claim.
- (2) All payments to the claimant will cease as of the date of the reversed decision unless the claimant is otherwise eligible.
- (3) No overpayment shall accrue to the claimant because of payment made prior to the reversal of the decision.

Thus the Employer’s account may not be charged for any benefits paid so far to the Claimant for the weeks in question, but the Claimant will not be required to repay benefits already received.

DECISION:

The administrative law judge’s decision dated March 29, 2017 is **REVERSED**. The Employment Appeal Board concludes that the Claimant was discharged for disqualifying misconduct. Accordingly, she is denied benefits until such time 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. See, Iowa Code section 96.5(2)”a”.

No remand for determination of overpayment need be made under the double affirmance rule, 871 IAC 23.43(3), but still the Employer's account may not be charged.

Kim D. Schmett

Ashley R. Koopmans

DISSENTING OPINION OF JAMES M. STROHMAN:

I respectfully dissent from the majority decision of the Employment Appeal Board; I would affirm the decision of the administrative law judge in its entirety.

James M. Strohman

RRA/fnv