

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**MARIA GOMEZ**

Claimant

**SWIFT PORK COMPANY**

Employer

**APPEAL 20A-UI-10812-S1-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 04/12/20**

**Claimant: Appellant (1/R)**

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Iowa Code § 96.4-3 – Able and Available  
871 IAC 24.23(10) – Voluntary Leave of Absence

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Maria Gomez (claimant) appealed a representative's August 17, 2020, decision (reference 01) that concluded ineligibility to receive unemployment insurance benefits as of April 12, 2020, because a leave of absence was granted by Swift Pork Company (employer) at the claimant's request. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for October 22, 2020. The claimant and her husband, Alejandro Mendoza, participated personally through the Spanish interpreter. The employer did not provide a telephone number where it could be reached and therefore, did not participate in the hearing.

The claimant offered and Exhibit A was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative file.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the claimant is available for work and whether the claimant was on an approved leave of absence.

**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 November 17, 2018, as a full-time laborer. She was diagnosed with Covid-19 and restricted from working from April 16, 2020, through May 18, 2020. Her employer approved her leave for that period. The claimant returned to work after her leave of absence.

The claimant filed for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of April 12, 2020. Her weekly benefit amount was determined to be \$545.00. The claimant received benefits of \$545.00 per week from April 12, 2020, to the week ending May 23, 2020. This is a total of \$3,270.00 in state unemployment insurance benefits after the separation from employment. She also received \$3,600.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation for the six-week period ending May 23, 2020.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", unnumbered paragraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1)a provides:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(1) Able to work. An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

a. Illness, injury or pregnancy. Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(1) and (10) provide:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(1) An individual who is ill and presently not able to perform work due to illness.

(10) The claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence, such period is deemed to be a period of voluntary unemployment and shall be considered ineligible for benefits for such period.

The claimant has the burden of proof in establishing his ability and availability for work. *Davoren v. Iowa Employment Security Commission*, 277 N.W.2d 602 (Iowa 1979). When employees are unable to perform work due to a medical condition, they are considered to be unavailable for work. When employees request and are granted a leave of absence, they are considered to be voluntarily unemployed. The claimant was absent due to illness and on a medical leave of absence. The employer granted the request. The claimant is considered to be

voluntarily unemployed, or unavailable for work, during the period of the medical leave of absence and is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits from April 12, 2020.

Even though the claimant is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits under state law, she may be eligible for federally funded unemployment insurance benefits under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("Cares Act"), Public Law 116-136. Section 2102 of the CARES Act creates a new temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) that in general provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits. An individual receiving PUA benefits may also receive the \$600 weekly benefit amount (WBA) under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program if he or she is eligible for such compensation for the week claimed. The claimant must apply for PUA, as noted in the instructions provided in the "Note to Claimant" below.

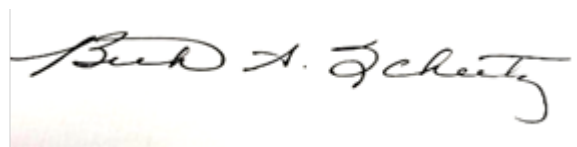
The issue of whether claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation is remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and decision.

**DECISION:**

The representative's August 17, 2020, decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The claimant is considered to be unavailable for work and is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits from April 12, 2020.

The issue of whether claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation is remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and decision.

*Note to Claimant:* This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits. If you disagree with this decision you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits, but who are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.



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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

October 26, 2020  
Decision Dated and Mailed