

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS AND APPEALS
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION, UI APPEALS BUREAU**

BROOKE P MCADEN
Claimant

APPEAL 22A-UI-10244-DS-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

FAMILY RESOURCES INC
Employer

**OC: 03/20/22
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32 – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On April 22, 2022, the employer filed an appeal from the unemployment insurance decision dated April 13, 2022, Reference 01 that allowed unemployment insurance benefits. Notice of hearing was mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 8:00 a.m. on June 7, 2022, at Des Moines, Iowa. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated through Julia Valencia, Payroll and Benefits Specialist. Employer's Exhibits 1 and 2 were admitted to the record. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

The claimant worked for this employer full-time as a Residential Assistant Supervisor from October 21, 2019, until March 8, 2022, when she was discharged by the employer. Her last day worked was March 8, 2022. On March 5, 2022, the claimant was interacting with a client who had made threats to harm herself and others. This client threatened the claimant with a sharpened pencil and bit the claimant. The claimant and other staff had to restrain the client, and in the process, the claimant was on the ground with the client. The client was spitting bodily fluids. Law enforcement was called to assist in the situation.

During further investigation, the employer reviewed a video of the incident. The employer then alleged that the claimant had intentionally stepped on the client's hair at some point during the encounter but was unable to state precisely how it happened. The claimant had not been previously disciplined for any reason, and the employer does not know why the claimant would have stepped on the client's hair.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed.

Iowa Code § 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Id.* Negligence does not constitute misconduct unless recurrent in nature; a single act is not disqualifying unless

indicative of a deliberate disregard of the employer's interests. *Henry v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 391 N.W.2d 731 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986).

This administrative law judge is not persuaded that the claimant intentionally stepped on the client's hair, if indeed she did at all. The claimant was in a chaotic situation and was required to deal with it on behalf of the employer. The employer has not met its burden to show that the claimant committed deliberate acts with wrongful intent serious enough to warrant denial of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The April 13, 2022, Reference 01 unemployment insurance decision allowing benefits is AFFIRMED. The claimant was discharged from the employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.



David J. Steen
Administrative Law Judge
Iowa Department of Inspections & Appeals
Administrative Hearings Division - UI Appeals Bureau

September 13, 2022
Decision Dated and Mailed

djs/sa

APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday. *There is no filing fee to file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board.*

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If you do not file an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at www.iowacourts.gov/efile. *There may be a filing fee to file the petition in District Court.*

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

WDERCHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal. *No hay tarifa de presentación para presentar una apelación ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo.*

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si no presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en una acción final de la agencia y tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en www.iowacourts.gov/efile. *Puede haber una tarifa de presentación para presentar la petición en el Tribunal de Distrito.*

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.