

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

NICOLE R PEDEN

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 16A-UI-08114-S1-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

SWIFT PORK COMPANY

Employer

OC: 06/26/16

Claimant: Respondent (1)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

Section 96.3-7 – Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Swift Pork Company (employer) appealed a representative's July 15, 2016, decision (reference 01) that concluded Nicole Peden (claimant) was eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for August 8, 2016. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Rogelio Bahena. Exhibit D-1 was received into evidence. The employer offered and Exhibit One was received into evidence.

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 8, 2010 as a full-time cut department box trim. The claimant signed for receipt of the employer's handbook on June 9, 2010. The handbook states that on an employee's tenth absence her employment will be terminated.

On May 20, 2016, the employer issued the claimant a written warning for accumulating six attendance points. She was absent two days to take her son to a specialist in Des Moines, Iowa. She was absent four days due to her own medical condition. All of the days were properly reported. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment.

On June 15, 2016, the employer issued the claimant a written warning for accumulating eight points. She properly reported her absence twice to take her son to a specialist in Des Moines, Iowa. She was tardy once. On June 17, 2016, the claimant properly reported her absence because she was sick. The employer terminated her on June 28, 2016, for excessive absenteeism.

The claimant filed for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of June 26, 2016. The employer participated personally at the fact-finding interview on July 13, 2016, by Christina Fankhauser.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

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).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer must establish not only misconduct but that there was a final incident of misconduct which precipitated the discharge. The last incident of absence was a properly reported illness which occurred on June 17, 2016. The claimant's absence does not amount to job misconduct because it was properly reported. The employer has failed to provide any evidence of willful and deliberate misconduct which would be a final incident leading to the discharge. The claimant was discharged but there was no misconduct.

DECISION:

The representative's July 15, 2016, decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The employer has not met its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/pjs