

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

KENDRA M BOWNDS

Claimant

APPEAL 20A-UI-011765-JC-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

SPEE-DEE DELIVERY SERVICE INC

Employer

OC: 05/03/20

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant/appellant, Kendra M. Bownds, filed an appeal from the September 10, 2020 (reference 04) Iowa Workforce Development (“IWD”) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on November 17, 2020.

The hearing was held as a consolidated hearing with Appeals 20A-UI-11762-JC-T, 20A-UI-11764-JC-T and 20A-UI-11763-JC-T.

The claimant participated. The employer, Spee-Dee Delivery Service Inc., participated through Aaron Lynch, human resources.

The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative records. Department Exhibit D-1 was admitted. Employer Exhibit A was also admitted. Based on the evidence, the arguments presented, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUES:

Is the appeal timely?

Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed full-time as a delivery driver. Claimant last performed work on April 30, 2020. Claimant established her claim for benefits with an effective date of May 3, 2020. Claimant permanently separated from employment on June 15, 2020. She voluntarily quit when she failed to return to work after a leave of absence. Continuing work was available.

Claimant did not perform work May 10-June 15, 2020. Claimant notified employer she went on a trip, and had symptoms of COVID-19. She tested negative for COVID-19 on May 13, 2020 and remained off work through the CDC’s recommended period of two weeks to self-quarantine.

She did not return to work on May 28, 2020 after the two week period ended and remained off work due to illness until separation. Employer spoke to claimant on June 2, 2020 about returning to work on June 8, 2020.

Claimant's leave of absence ended June 7, 2020. She failed to return to work after her leave of absence ended. She did not make contact with the employer to update it of her condition or to request an extension to the leave of absence. Employer waited one week before determining claimant had quit the employment. Separation thereby ensued.

An initial unemployment insurance decision (Reference 04) resulting in a denial of benefits was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record on September 10, 2020. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Bureau by September 20, 2020. Because September 20, 2020 was a Sunday, the final day to appeal was extended to September 21, 2020. Claimant received the initial decision within the appeal period. Claimant filed her appeal using the online option (Department Exhibit D-1). She filed the appeal on September 25, 2020 after the deadline. The delay in filing was because claimant called IWD on September 18, 2020 and was advised it was a misunderstanding. Claimant followed upon September 25, 2020 when her benefits had been suspended and learned she needed to file an appeal. She filed her appeal on September 25, 2020 using the online option (Department Exhibit D-1).

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's appeal is timely.

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part:

Filing – determination – appeal.

The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. . . . Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

Date of submission and extension of time for payments and notices.

(2) The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

a. For submission that is not within the statutory or regulatory period to be considered timely, the interested party must submit a written explanation setting forth the circumstances of the delay.

b. The division shall designate personnel who are to decide whether an extension of time shall be granted.

c. No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the department after considering the circumstances in the case.

d. If submission is not considered timely, although the interested party contends that the delay was due to division error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States postal service, the division shall issue an appealable decision to the interested party.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. Claimant was given incomplete guidance when contacted IWD during the prescribed appeal period. She should have been advised to appeal if she disagreed with any decision. The administrative law judge concludes that the claimant's delay in filing a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law *was due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service* pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). Therefore, the appeal shall be accepted as timely.

Iowa unemployment insurance law disqualifies claimants who voluntarily quit employment without good cause attributable to the employer or who are discharged for work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code §§ 96.5(1) and 96.5(2)a. They remain disqualified until such time as they requalify for benefits by working and earning insured wages ten times their weekly benefit amount. *Id.*

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 96.1A, subsection 38, paragraph "b", subparagraph (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. 871-24.23(10) provides:

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

(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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 24.22(2) provides:

Available for work. The availability requirement is satisfied when an individual is willing, able, and ready to accept suitable work which the individual does not have good cause to refuse, that is, the individual is genuinely attached to the labor market. Since, under unemployment insurance laws, it is the availability of an individual that is required to be tested, the labor market must be described in terms of the individual. A labor market for an individual means a market for the type of service which the individual offers in the geographical area in which the individual offers the service. Market in that sense does not mean that job vacancies must exist; the purpose of unemployment insurance is to compensate for lack of job vacancies. It means only that the type of services which an individual is offering is generally performed in the geographical area in which the individual is offering the services.

j. Leave of absence. A leave of absence negotiated *with the consent of both parties*, employer and employee, is deemed a period of voluntary unemployment for the employee-individual, and the individual is considered ineligible for benefits for the period.

(1) If at the end of a period or term of negotiated leave of absence the employer fails to reemploy the employee-individual, the individual is considered laid off and eligible for benefits.

(2) If the employee-individual fails to return at the end of the leave of absence and subsequently becomes unemployed the individual is considered as having voluntarily quit and therefore is ineligible for benefits.

(3) The period or term of a leave of absence may be extended, but only if there is evidence that both parties have voluntarily agreed.

Claimant in this case last worked on April 30, 2020. She began a leave of absence for personal medical reasons and to quarantine after personal exposure to COVID-19. Employer discussed claimant's leave of absence would expire on June 7, 2020 with claimant during a phone call on June 8, 2020. Claimant did not return to work, nor did employer consent to an extension of her leave of absence.

Therefore claimant voluntarily quit the employment. Benefits are denied.

Note to Claimant: This decision denies benefits. *If this decision becomes final or if you are not eligible for PUA, you may have an overpayment of 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>.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated September 10, 2020, (reference 04) is affirmed. The appeal is timely. The claimant voluntarily quit the employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible.



Jennifer L. Beckman
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November 24, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

jlb/mh