

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

COLLEEN K FREESE
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 14A-UI-06636-ET

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

LA LEASING INC
Employer

OC: 10/06/13
Claimant: Respondent (2)

Iowa Code Section 96.5(1)d – Voluntary Leaving/Illness or Injury
871 IAC 24.25(35) – Separation Due to Illness or Injury
Iowa Code Section 96.3-7 – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the June 24, 2014, reference 03, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on July 18, 2014. The claimant participated in the hearing. Kathy Hutchinson, Branch Manager, and Colleen McGuinty, Unemployment Insurance Benefits Administrator, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant voluntarily left her position due to a non-work-related injury or illness.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time Press Department employee for L A Leasing, last assigned to work at M.C. Industries from March 31, 2014 to May 23, 2014. She gradually began experiencing pain in her shoulder and neck while working on a rental house with her husband. She sought treatment in an emergency room and decided she could no longer continue her employment. She called the employer and stated she was no longer physically able to perform her job. She was not advised by a physician that she had to quit her job.

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits since her separation from this employer.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant is temporarily separated from her employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1-d provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department. But the individual shall not be disqualified if the department finds that:

d. The individual left employment because of illness, injury or pregnancy upon the advice of a licensed and practicing physician, and upon knowledge of the necessity for absence immediately notified the employer, or the employer consented to the absence, and after recovering from the illness, injury or pregnancy, when recovery was certified by a licensed and practicing physician, the individual returned to the employer and offered to perform services and the individual's regular work or comparable suitable work was not available, if so found by the department, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25(35) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code section 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(35) The claimant left because of illness or injury which was not caused or aggravated by the employment or pregnancy and failed to:

- (a) Obtain the advice of a licensed and practicing physician;
- (b) Obtain certification of release for work from a licensed and practicing physician;
- (c) Return to the employer and offer services upon recovery and certification for work by a licensed and practicing physician; or
- (d) Fully recover so that the claimant could perform all of the duties of the job.

The claimant has not been released to return to full work duties and the employer is not obligated to accommodate a non-work-related medical condition. Accordingly, the separation is without good cause attributable to the employer and benefits must be denied.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if unrebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most

effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists. The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)"b" as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did

not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. While the claimant did not receive unemployment insurance benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, the employer did participate in the fact-finding interview. In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. Consequently, the claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$3,264.00.

DECISION:

The June 24, 2014, reference 03, decision is reversed. The claimant's separation was without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as the claimant works in and has been paid wages equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible or until such time as the claimant obtains a full release without restriction to return to regular duties, offers services to the employer, and the employer has no comparable, suitable work available. The claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$3,264.00.

Julie Elder
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

je/can