

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

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IA DEPT OF CORRECTIONS/FT MADISON
C/o TALX UCM SERVICES INC
PO BOX 283
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 04A-UI-09717-MT
OC: 08/08/04 R: 04
Claimant: Respondent (1)

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

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.

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.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may 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. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct
Section 96.3-7 – Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated August 30, 2004, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on October 27, 2004. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Pat Marshall, Executive Officer, and John Emmett, Security Director and Bill Sperfslage, Deputy Warden. Exhibit One was admitted into evidence.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for the employer July 25, 2004.

Employer discharged claimant on July 25, 2004 because claimant allegedly asked an inmate at the prison to obtain some oranges from the cafeteria. Fruit outside the cafeteria is prohibited because of the danger of it being made into alcohol. It is also a violation of policy for employees to ask inmates to perform tasks. An inmate was confronted by another correctional officer about oranges in the inmate's possession. The inmate said the oranges were for claimant and eventually assaulted the correctional officer who stopped him. The correctional officer victim suffered five broken facial bones from the assault. Claimant had a prior warning on her record for another policy violation. Claimant did not ask the inmate to obtain oranges for her benefit.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

871 IAC 24.32(1)a, (8) provide:

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 Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

(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 administrative law judge holds that the evidence has established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated the employer's policy concerning inmates and contraband. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge fails to constitute misconduct because claimant's testimony is in person and under oath. As an issue of law, sworn testimony is more credible than hearsay offered by employer. There is no first hand evidence that claimant asked an inmate to procure fruit from the cafeteria. Therefore, claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated August 30, 2004, reference 01, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

mdm\kjf