

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

SHARI S HAMMOND
Claimant

**TRUSTEES OF THE GRAND CHARITY
FUND**
Employer

APPEAL 20A-UI-09062-S1-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 03/22/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.4-3 – Able and Available
871 IAC 24.23(10) – Voluntary Leave of Absence

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Shari Hammond (claimant) appealed a representative's July 22, 2020, decision (reference 02) that concluded ineligibility to receive unemployment insurance benefits as of March 22, 2020, because a leave of absence was granted by Trustees of the Grand Charity Fund (employer) at the claimant's request. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on September 16, 2020. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Deann Milefchik, Human Resources Director. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative file.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant is available for work and whether the claimant was on an approved leave of absence.

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 March 5, 2018, as a full-time licensed practical nurse. The employer approved the claimant's vacation request in March 2020, so she could travel to Cancun, Mexico, for her son's wedding. Just prior to the travel, the Center for Disease Control and Iowa Public Health Agencies indicated that people traveling outside the state and outside the country must quarantine for fourteen days to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The administrator told the claimant she would likely have to quarantine if she traveled to Mexico. The claimant told the administrator she was going to the wedding "no matter what". The administrator told the claimant to call her before she returned to work. The claimant and the assistant director of nursing went to Mexico for the wedding. When the two returned, the employer instructed them both to quarantine before they could return to work based on information from federal and state sources about the spread of the pandemic. The claimant quarantined for the two-week period ending April 4, 2020.

The claimant filed for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of March 22, 2020. Her weekly benefit amount was determined to be \$500.00. The claimant received benefits of \$500.00 per week from March 22, 2020, to the week ending April 4, 2020. This is a total of \$1,000.00 in state unemployment insurance benefits after the separation from employment. She also received \$1,200.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation for the two-week period ending April 4, 2020.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", unnumbered paragraph (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. 871-24.22(1)a provides:

Benefits eligibility conditions. For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

(1) Able to work. An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

a. Illness, injury or pregnancy. Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(1) provides:

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

(1) An individual who is ill and presently not able to perform work due to illness.

The claimant has the burden of proof in establishing his ability and availability for work. *Davoren v. Iowa Employment Security Commission*, 277 N.W.2d 602 (Iowa 1979). When employees are unable to perform work due to a medical condition, they are considered to be unavailable for work. In this case, state and federal medical experts indicated that employees must quarantine for fourteen days before returning to work. The claimant was deemed to be

medically unable to work until after her quarantine. The claimant was not able and available for work as of March 22, 2020.

Even though the claimant is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits under state law, she may be eligible for federally funded unemployment insurance benefits under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("Cares Act"), Public Law 116-136. Section 2102 of the CARES Act creates a new temporary federal program called Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) that in general provides up to 39 weeks of unemployment benefits. An individual receiving PUA benefits may also receive the \$600 weekly benefit amount (WBA) under the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program if he or she is eligible for such compensation for the week claimed. The claimant must apply for PUA, as noted in the instructions provided in the "Note to Claimant" below.

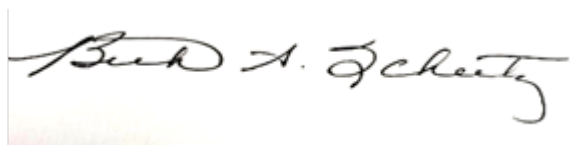
The issue of whether claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation is remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and decision.

DECISION:

The representative's July 22, 2020, decision (reference 02) is affirmed. The claimant is considered to be unavailable for work and is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits from March 22, 2020.

The issue of whether claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation is remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and decision.

Note to Claimant: This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance 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>.



Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

September 24, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/sam