

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

HEATHER A SHUFFIELD
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-06212-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**CASEY'S MARKETING COMPANY
CASEY'S GENERAL STORES**
Employer

**OC: 02/27/11
Claimant: Respondent (2-R)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Leaving
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the April 27, 2011 (reference 02) decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on June 7, 2011. Claimant did not respond to the hearing notice instructions and did not participate. Employer participated through manager Dixie Dukes. Employer's Exhibit 1 was admitted to the record.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of benefits and whether she is overpaid benefits as a result.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant most recently worked full time as an assistant manager and was separated from employment on February 8, 2011. She failed to return to work or otherwise communicate with the employer after the employer repeatedly asked her to provide medical documentation for a prior absence. After several unfulfilled requests, Dukes had told her she would cut her hours until she did provide the requested excuses. Continued work was available.

Claimant has received unemployment benefits since filing a claim with an effective date of February 27, 2011.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant voluntarily left the employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 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.

While the circumstances of the temporary reduction in hours might be considered a change in the contract of hire, employer did so only because claimant had failed to follow reasonable instructions to provide medical documentation for a prior absence. Since that would be considered misconduct, employer's option to demote rather than discharge did not give claimant a good cause reason for leaving the employment. Furthermore, when an individual mistakenly believes they are discharged from employment, but was not told so by the employer, and they discontinue reporting for work, the separation is considered a quit without good cause attributable to the employer. Claimant's failure to continue reporting to work was an abandonment of her job. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Because claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which claimant was not entitled. 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 may

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. If so, the employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits.

DECISION:

The April 27, 2011 (reference 02) decision is reversed. Claimant voluntarily left 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.

REMAND: The matter of determining the amount of the potential overpayment and whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/css