

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**ZENDA VIKTUREK**  
Claimant

**APPEAL 21A-UI-16639-S2-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**WAVERLY HEALTH CENTER**  
Employer

**OC: 04/11/21  
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

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Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quit  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment  
PL 116-136 – Federal Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Employer/Representative Participation Fact-finding Interview

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed an appeal from the July 19, 2021, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based upon a finding that claimant was discharged for unsatisfactory work, which is not misconduct. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on September 21, 2021. Claimant Zenda Vikturek participated and testified. Employer Waverly Health Center participated through director of human resources Angie Tye and ambulance manager Robin Chisholm. Employer's Exhibits 1 – 3 were received and admitted into the record. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

**ISSUES:**

Is the claimant disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits during her disciplinary suspension?  
Has the claimant been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits, and if so, can the repayment of those benefits to the agency be waived?  
Is the claimant eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full-time as a paramedic from December 3, 2007, and was separated from employment on May 17, 2021, when she was discharged.

Employer maintains safety protocols, including requiring employees to arrive at a call with the necessary supplies and not abandoning a patient. In addition to receiving training by employer, paramedics are also aware of these safety protocols as part of their initial training and licensing. Claimant was aware of these safety protocols involving being prepared to assist patients and continuation of care.

On April 6, 2021, claimant and her partner, an EMT, responded to a call involving a patient in labor. The patient's boyfriend met claimant and her partner at the door and claimant believed the patient was in the lobby of the apartment building. Instead, she was upstairs on the second floor, in the bathroom. Claimant and her partner went up to the second floor with no medical supplies to assist the patient. In this situation, a cot and an OB kit, used to assist in monitoring the baby and mother, would have been the appropriate supplies to bring. After assessing the patient, claimant and her partner left the patient alone to return to the ambulance. While at the ambulance, the patient's boyfriend came down and informed them that claimant's water broke. Claimant and the EMT returned with a cot, but no OB kit. By the time they returned, the patient had delivered her baby by herself.

When two other paramedics arrived at the scene, claimant told them they were not needed. Rather than have one of the paramedics ride with the claimant, patient, and her baby in the back of the ambulance to provide the highest level of care, claimant had the EMT ride with her in the back.

On April 6, 2021, employer received a complaint from the patient and her boyfriend regarding claimant's care of the patient and her baby. After speaking to the patient about her complaint, employer suspended claimant that same day, for violating its safety protocols and pending further investigation into the incident. Employer conducted an investigation, with a review by the chief nursing officer and medical director, as well as an investigation by the Iowa Department of Public Health due to the nature of claimant's license as a paramedic.

On May 17, 2021, employer discharged claimant for violating its safety protocols. (Exhibit 1) Employer found claimant violated safety protocols by not arriving with the appropriate supplies for the situation, as well as a violation of the continuation of care and patient abandonment by leaving the patient alone to retrieve supplies, and then returning without the OB kit.

On June 21, 2019, claimant was placed on a performance improvement plan for failing to provide proper patient care. (Exhibit 3)

The administrative record reflects that claimant has received unemployment benefits in the amount of \$2,958.00, since filing a claim with an effective date of April 11, 2021, for the six weeks ending May 22, 2021, and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) benefits in the amount of \$1,800.00 for the six weeks ending May 22, 2021. Employer participated in the fact finding interview through director of human resources Angie Tye and submitted written documentation in support of its position.

#### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was suspended and discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct.

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

871 IAC 24.32(1)a provides:

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).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dept of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dept of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). The Iowa Court of Appeals found substantial evidence of misconduct in testimony that the claimant worked slower than he was capable of working and would temporarily and briefly improve following oral reprimands. *Sellers v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 531 N.W.2d 645 (Iowa Ct. App. 1995). Generally, continued refusal to follow reasonable instructions constitutes misconduct. *Gilliam v. Atlantic Bottling Co.*, 453 N.W.2d 230 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. *Newman v. Iowa Dept of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(9) provides:

(9) Suspension or disciplinary layoff. Whenever a claim is filed and the reason for the claimant's unemployment is the result of a disciplinary layoff or suspension imposed by the employer, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct must be resolved. Alleged misconduct or dishonesty without corroboration is not sufficient to result in disqualification. This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.5 and Supreme Court of

Iowa decision, *Cosper vs. Iowa Department of Job Service and Blue Cross of Iowa*.

Workers in the medical care profession reasonably have a higher standard of care required in the performance of their job duties. That duty is evident by special licensing requirements. Claimant failed to follow the standards of care expected of a paramedic on more than one occasion. Employer warned claimant in writing about her care of patients on June 21, 2019. Despite that warning, claimant still failed to follow accepted standards of patient care on April 6, 2021. Under these circumstances, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant's conduct demonstrated a willful disregard of the standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect of employees and shows an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests and the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. The employer has met its burden of proving disqualifying job misconduct. Employer established claimant was suspended and discharged for a reason that amounts to misconduct. Therefore, benefits are denied.

The next issue in this case is whether claimant was overpaid unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) provides, in pertinent part:

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.

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 § 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 § 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 § 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 § 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 § 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 § 96.3(7)"b" as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

Because claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which she was not entitled. The administrative law judge concludes the claimant has been overpaid regular state unemployment insurance (UI) in the gross amount of \$2,958.00 for the six weeks ending May 22, 2021. 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. The employer will not be charged for benefits if it is determined that they did participate in the fact-finding interview. Iowa Code § 96.3(7), Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10.

Here, employer participated in a phone fact-finding interview and submitted documents during the fact-finding investigation. Since the employer did participate in the fact-finding interview, claimant is obligated to repay the benefits she received and the employer's account shall not be charged.

The next issues to be determined are whether claimant was eligible for FPUC and whether claimant has been overpaid FPUC. For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was not eligible for FPUC and was overpaid FPUC, which must be repaid.

PL116-136, Sec. 2104 provides, in pertinent part:

(b) Provisions of Agreement

(1) Federal pandemic unemployment compensation.--Any agreement under this section shall provide that the State agency of the State will make payments of regular compensation to individuals in amounts and to the extent that they would be determined if the State law of the State were applied, with respect to any week for which the individual is (disregarding this section) otherwise entitled under the State law to receive regular compensation, as if such State law had been modified in a manner such that the amount of regular compensation (including dependents' allowances) payable for any week shall be equal to

(A) the amount determined under the State law (before the application of this paragraph), plus

(B) an additional amount of \$600 (in this section referred to as "Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation").

...

(f) Fraud and Overpayments

(2) Repayment.--In the case of individuals who have received amounts of Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation to which they were not entitled, the State shall require such individuals to repay the amounts of such Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation to the State agency...

Because claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits, she is also disqualified from receiving FPUC. While Iowa law does not require a claimant to repay regular unemployment insurance benefits when the employer does not participate in the fact-finding interview, the CARES Act makes no such exception for the repayment of FPUC. Therefore, the determination of whether the claimant must repay FPUC does not hinge on the employer's participation in the fact-finding interview. The administrative law judge concludes that claimant has been overpaid FPUC in the gross amount of \$1,800.00 for the six weeks ending May 22, 2021. Claimant must repay these benefits.

**DECISION:**

The July 19, 2021, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was suspended and discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. 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. Claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$2,958.00, and these benefits must be repaid. Employer did participate in the fact-finding interview and its account shall not be charged. Claimant is overpaid \$1,800.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, and these benefits must be repaid.



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Stephanie Adkisson  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax (515)478-3528

September 24, 2021  
Decision Dated and Mailed

sa/mh

**NOTE TO CLAIMANT:**

- This decision determines you have been overpaid FPUC 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.
- You may also request a waiver of this overpayment. The written request must include the following information:
  1. Claimant name & address.
  2. Decision number/date of decision.
  3. Dollar amount of overpayment requested for waiver.
  4. Relevant facts that you feel would justify a waiver.
- The request should be sent to:

Iowa Workforce Development  
Overpayment waiver request  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50319
- This Information can also be found on the Iowa Workforce Development website at: <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/unemployment-insurance-overpayment-and-recovery>.
- If this decision becomes final and you are not eligible for a waiver, you will have to repay the benefits you received.