

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

AIMEE K SCHULTZ  
803 – 2<sup>ND</sup> AVE S  
DENISON IA 51442

HCM INC  
c/o TALX UCM SERVICES  
PO BOX 283  
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-01735-DT  
OC: 01/16/05 R: 01  
Claimant: Respondent (2)

**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, 4<sup>th</sup> 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.

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(Administrative Law Judge)

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(Decision Dated & Mailed)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

HCM, Inc. (employer) appealed a representative's February 14, 2005 decision (reference 01) that concluded Aimee K. Schultz (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on March 7, 2005. The claimant participated in the hearing. Steven Fitzgerald appeared on the employer's behalf and presented testimony from one other witness, Gay Melby. During the hearing, Employer's Exhibit One was entered into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for work-connected misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant started working for the employer on August 13, 2004. She worked full time (approximately 30 hours per week) as a certified nursing aide (CNA) in the employer's Denison, Iowa long-term care nursing facility. Her last day of work was December 24, 2004.

On or about December 10, 2004, the schedule was posted for work from December 17 through December 30; the claimant was scheduled to work morning shifts on December 17, December 20, December 21, December 24, December 25, December 26, December 28, December 29, and December 30. Subsequently she added an afternoon shift on December 19, 2004 to fill in for someone. She called in an absence for personal reasons on December 20, as she accompanied her sister who was being transferred to a hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. On December 21, 2004, the claimant forgot that she was scheduled to work and stayed with her sister in Omaha, and as a no-call, no-show for work that day. On December 22, 2004, she went in to meet with the employer on her attendance. She demonstrated that she had gotten some dates mixed up, contributing to her missing work on December 21, so she was given a final warning regarding her attendance. She had previously been given attendance warnings on October 23 and November 10, 2004. Some of her prior absences had been due to personal illness, some had been personal, and some had been tardies.

The claimant worked on December 24, 2004, clocking in at 5:29 a.m. and clocking out at 2:18 p.m. Mr. Fitzgerald did not work that day, and did not contact the claimant. The claimant was a no-call, no-show for work on December 25 and December 26, 2004. On December 27, 2004, Mr. Fitzgerald, the administrator, called the claimant's home and left a message that she was no longer employed.

The claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective January 16, 2005. The claimant has received unemployment insurance benefits after the separation from employment in the amount of \$1,145.00.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the employer discharged the claimant for reasons establishing work-connected misconduct. The issue is not whether the employer was right or even had any other choice but to terminate the claimant's employment, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. Infante v. IDJS, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what is misconduct that warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. Pierce v. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code §96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

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).

871 IAC 24.32(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

The claimant asserted that the reason she was a no-call, no-show for work on December 25 and December 26, 2004 was that she had already gotten the message from Mr. Fitzgerald that she was no longer employed. The claimant's testimony on this point is not credible; if she had gotten the message she was no longer employed on December 23, she would not have reported for work on December 24, and Mr. Fitzgerald was not available and did not contact the claimant on December 24, 2004. The claimant's final absences were not excused and were not due to illness or other reasonable grounds. The claimant had previously been warned that future absences could result in termination. Higgins v. IDJS, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). The employer discharged the claimant for reasons amounting to work-connected misconduct.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. 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.

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.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. Those benefits must be recovered in accordance with the provisions of Iowa law.

DECISION:

The representative's February 14, 2005 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The employer discharged the claimant for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits as of December 27, 2004. This disqualification continues until she has been paid ten times her weekly benefit amount for insured work, provided she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account will not be charged. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$1,145.00.

ld/pjs