

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

RENA L WELU
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 16A-UI-05363-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

MARTIN LUTHER HOME CORPORATION
Employer

OC: 04/10/16
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code Section 96.5(2)(a) – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.32(9) - Suspension

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the May 2, 2016, reference 02, decision that disqualified her for benefits and that relieved the employer of liability for benefits, based on an Agency conclusion that the claimant had been suspended on April 14, 2016 for misconduct in connection with the employment. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on May 25, 2016. Claimant participated. Janet Patters represented the employer. The hearing in this matter was consolidated with the hearing in Appeal Number 16A-UI-05364-JTT. The administrative law judge took official notice of the Agency's administrative record of benefits paid to the claimant.

ISSUE:

Whether the claimant was suspended for misconduct in connection with the employment that disqualifies the claimant for unemployment insurance benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant is employed by Martin Luther Home Corporation as a full-time certified nursing assistant. On April 14, 2016, the employer suspended the claimant from the employment pending an investigation into whether the claimant had thrown a towel at a resident client. The claimant had not in fact thrown a towel at a resident client. The claimant returned to the employment on May 2, 2016 following conclusion of the investigation.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proof in this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.32(9) provides as follows:

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.

The evidence in the record establishes that the claimant did not commit the alleged act that prompted the suspension. The claimant was suspended for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged for benefits paid to the claimant for period of the suspension.

DECISION:

The May 2, 2016, reference 02, decision is reversed. Claimant was suspended on April 14, 2016 for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged for benefits.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/pjs