

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

DARIN E WITT
Claimant

EARLHAM COMMUNITY SCHOOL DIST
Employer

APPEAL 21A-UI-02193-S1-T
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 10/04/20
Claimant: Respondent (2/R)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.5-1 - Voluntary Quit
Iowa Code § 96.3-7 – Overpayment
871 IAC 24.10 – Employer Participation in the Fact-Finding Interview

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Earlham Community School District (employer) appealed a representative's December 31, 2020, decision (reference 01) that concluded Darin Witt (claimant) was eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on March 2, 2021. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Jodi Stroud, Business Manager, and Shawn Boyle, Director of Buildings and Grounds.

The employer offered and Exhibit One was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative file.

ISSUE:

The issues include whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason, whether the claimant was overpaid benefits, and which party should be charged for those benefits.

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 October 12, 2017, as a full-time custodian. On October 1 or 2, 2020, the employer issued the claimant a verbal reprimand regarding the claimant's repeated absenteeism. The employer told the claimant he had choices.

The claimant could appear for work when scheduled or quit work. If the claimant continued to work and be absent, he risked termination. On October 2, 2020, the claimant gave the employer his resignation. Continued work was available with the employer had the claimant not resigned.

The claimant filed for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of October 4, 2020. His weekly benefit amount was determined to be \$255.00. The employer participated personally at the fact-finding interview on December 30, 2020, by Jodi Stroud and Shawn Boyle.

The claimant received benefits from October 4, 2020, to the week ending January 23, 2021. This is a total of \$3,825.00 in state unemployment insurance benefits after October 4, 2020. He also received \$1,200.00 in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation as of January 23, 2021.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant voluntarily quit work without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code section 96.5(1) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25(28) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code section 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

- (28) The claimant left after being reprimanded.

A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980). The claimant's intention to voluntarily leave work was evidenced by words and actions. When employees quit work after having been reprimanded, their leaving is without good cause attributable to the employer. The claimant left work after the employer reprimanded him about his absences. His leaving was without good cause attributable to the employer. The claimant voluntarily quit without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are denied.

Even though the claimant is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits under state law, he 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 unemployment insurance law requires benefits be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later denied benefits even if the claimant acted in good faith and was not at fault. However, a claimant will not have to repay an overpayment when an initial decision to award benefits on an employment separation issue is reversed on appeal if two conditions are met: (1) the claimant did not receive the benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, and (2) the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding that awarded benefits. In addition, if a claimant is not required to repay an overpayment because the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding, the employer's account will be charged for the overpaid benefits. Iowa Code section 96.3(7)a, b.

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

The claimant has received unemployment insurance benefits that the claimant was not entitled to receive. The employer participated personally in the fact-finding interview and is not chargeable. The claimant is overpaid unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.3(7)a-b, 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.

The claimant received \$3,825.00 in unemployment insurance benefits from October 4, 2020, to January 23, 2021. This was during the period of time the claimant has been determined to be ineligible to receive benefits. The claimant was overpaid unemployment insurance benefits pursuant to Iowa Code Section 96.3-7 for that period.

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

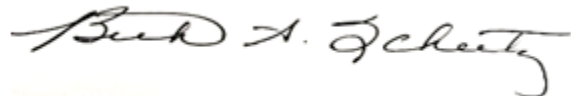
DECISION:

The representative's December 31, 2020, decision (reference 01) is reversed. The claimant voluntarily left work without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the claimant's weekly benefit amount provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

The claimant has received unemployment insurance benefits that the claimant was not entitled to receive. The employer participated personally in the fact-finding interview and is not chargeable. The claimant is overpaid unemployment insurance benefits of \$3,825.00 from October 4, 2020 through January 23, 2021.

The issue of whether claimant has been 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 due to disqualifying separations, 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

March 8, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/lj