

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

LARENZO DODD

Claimant

APPEAL 20A-UI-13117-S1-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

CARE INITIATIVES

Employer

OC: 07/05/20

Claimant: Respondent (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) - Timeliness of Appeal

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 - Voluntary Quit

Iowa Code § 96.3-7 – Overpayment

PL 116-136 Section 2104 (B) – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation

871 IAC 24.10 – Employer Participation in the Fact-Finding Interview

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Care Initiatives (employer) appealed a representative's September 16, 2020, decision (reference 03) that concluded Lorenzo Dodd (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 December 22, 2020. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Alyce Smolsky, Hearings Representative, and Eric Frahm, Dietary Manager.

Exhibit D-1 was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative file.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the appeal was filed in a timely manner.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: A decision was mailed to the employer's last known address of record on September 16, 2020. The address of record was the address of the employer's representative. The employer's representative had a large influx of cases. It hired more employees and purchased more machines to open the mail.

When mail arrived at the representative's mailbox, the representative did not date stamp the item to record its receipt. The first date the representative assigned to the document is the date when it was opened, sorted the document and was placed in a file. It does not track the item to show each step along the way. There is no certainty of the lag time of mail in the facility that receives the mail.

The employer's representative placed the decision in a file on October 22, 2020. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by September 28, 2020. The appeal was not filed until October 22, 2020, which is after the date noticed on the decision. The representative asks for leniency with regard to timeliness because it could not manage all of its customer's business.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion.

Hendren v. IESC, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

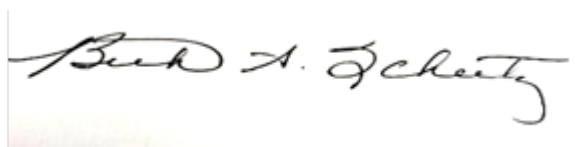
While the administrative law judge is sympathetic to the employer's/representative's situation, the law extends the same rules to the single party as is does to the larger company. The laws cannot be bent to aid one side or they will be broken and injustice will result for the other.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The September 16, 2020, reference 03, decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect.

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

January 6, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/scn