

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

LAURIE L BREWER
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 11A-UI-01072-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

FOCUS SERVICES LLC
Employer

**OC: 11/07/10
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Focus Services, L.L.C. (employer) appealed a representative's January 19, 2011 decision (reference 01) that concluded Laurie L Brewer (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 1, 2011. This appeal was consolidated for hearing with one related appeal, 11A-UI-01073-DT. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which a witness or representative could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the claimant, 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 or about February 9, 2010. She worked part time (30 – 38 hours per week) as a telemarketer out of the employer's Clinton, Iowa call center. Her last day of work was November 12, 2010. The employer discharged her on that date. The reason asserted for the discharge was failing pass a background check.

The background check revealed a 2009 felony theft charge to which the claimant had pled guilty. When the claimant had applied for employment to the employer, she had reported the charge and plea to the person who interviewed her and ultimately offered her the job. The claimant had understood that between her first and second interviews the employer was going to do a background check, and that if she got a call back for a second interview, that would mean that the 2009 charge and plea was not going to be a problem.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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). The question is not whether the employer was right 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 matters. Pierce v. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988).

In order to establish misconduct such as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa App. 1986). The conduct must show a 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. 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; Huntoon, supra; Henry, supra. In contrast, 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. 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; Huntoon, supra; Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984).

The reason cited by the employer for discharging the claimant is her failure of the background check conducted seven months after she self-reported the underlying charge and plea and as hired for the job despite that report. There is no current act of misconduct as required to establish work-connected misconduct. 871 IAC 24.32(8); Greene v. Employment Appeal Board, 426 N.W.2d 659 (Iowa App. 1988). Further, the claimant did not make any false statement when applying for the position that was then subsequently discovered; the information regarding the charge and plea cannot be considered material since the employer hired the claimant despite knowing of the charge and plea. Larson v. Employment Appeal Board, 474 N.W.2d 570 (Iowa 1991), citing Independent School District v. Hanson, 412 N.W.2d 320 (Minn. App. 1987). The employer has not met its burden to show disqualifying misconduct. Cosper, supra. Based upon the evidence provided, the claimant's actions were not misconduct within the meaning of the statute, and the claimant is not disqualified from benefits.

DECISION:

The representative's January 19, 2011 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The employer did discharge the claimant but not for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits, if she is otherwise eligible.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/css