

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**VIOLA C JOHNSON-BROWNLEE**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-00805-LT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**LIBERTY FOOD SERVICE INC**  
Employer

**OC: 10/31/10**  
**Claimant: Respondent (2-R)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Leaving  
Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the January 13, 2011 (reference 01) decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on February 24, 2011. Claimant participated. Employer participated through general manager. Jeff Helmold.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether claimant quit the employment without good cause attributable to the employer or if she was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits and whether she is overpaid benefits as a result.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant most recently worked full time as a cafeteria worker from August 26, 2010 and was separated from employment on October 26, 2010. She called Helmold on that date and told him, "I'm not just able to find sitters anymore so you're just going to have to fire me." Helmold told her that he was not firing her and that if she would not be working there any longer she would have to resign. Her response was that she just could not work anymore. She may have been given a warning but was not going to lose her job and continued work was available as she not quit. She had childcare issues related to her ten-year-old daughter's chronic illness but has made arrangements for childcare if she finds full-time work. She is eligible to reapply for work with this employer.

Claimant has received unemployment benefits since filing a claim with an effective date of October 31, 2010.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant voluntarily left the employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

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.

871 IAC 24.25(17) 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 § 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 § 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:

(17) The claimant left because of lack of child care.

Claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code § 96.6(2).

Generally, when an individual mistakenly believes they are discharged from employment, but was not told so by the employer, and they discontinue reporting for work, the separation is considered a quit without good cause attributable to the employer. Since claimant's assumption of having been fired was erroneous, her failure to continue reporting to work was an abandonment of her job. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, 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.

b. (1) 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. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in

the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Because claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which claimant was not entitled. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment may not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. If so, the employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits.

**DECISION:**

The January 13, 2011 (reference 01) decision is reversed. Claimant voluntarily left the employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible.

**REMAND:** The matter of determining the amount of the potential overpayment and whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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