

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

STEPHANIE CHATTERTON
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 12A-UI-05201-BT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

REM IOWA COMMUNITY SERVICES INC
Employer

OC: 08/14/11
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 - Voluntary Quit
Iowa Code § 96.6-2 - Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Stephanie Chatterton (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated September 16, 2011, reference 02, which held that she was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because she voluntarily quit her employment with REM Iowa Community Services, Inc. (employer) without good cause attributable to the employer. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on May 29, 2012. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Tracy Herweg, program director. Exhibit D-1 and Employer's Exhibit One were admitted into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant's appeal is timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and having considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: A disqualification decision was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record on September 16, 2011. The claimant denied receiving the decision but admitted she knew she had been disqualified as a result of the fact-finding interview. She testified that the fact-finder told her that she was denied any further benefits unless a hearing was going to proceed forward and that she would receive a letter saying she owed the money back, but she did not receive that until six months later. She initially said the fact-finder did not tell her she would receive a letter confirming she was disqualified but subsequently changed that testimony.

The claimant filed weekly claims for benefits for five weeks ending on September 17, 2011. The administrative law judge asked the claimant why she filed for benefits for the week ending September 17, 2011 if the fact-finder told her on September 15, 2011 that she was no longer eligible for benefits. The claimant responded that she believed she filed for weekly benefits the day before the interview, which would have been September 14, 2011. She was then

questioned as to how she could file for benefits before the week ended and she said she did not remember why she filed the week after that.

The claimant testified that she called Workforce within a day or two after the fact-finding interview to report the fact-finder was "very rude, very nasty with me". The claimant told Workforce that she wanted to appeal the disqualification and testified that, "They said they would appeal it." She subsequently said Iowa Workforce told her she would receive a decision but she never did and when asked why she did not contact Iowa Workforce regarding the decision, she stated, "I didn't feel it was worth my time to fight with REM over payments."

The administrative law judge reserved judgment on the timeliness and took additional evidence. It should be noted that the claimant initially testified that she was able to go back to work when she filed her claim for benefits effective August 14, 2011. She subsequently testified that she was not released to return to work until August 29, 2011, and that was a release with restrictions. The claimant was asked how she could claim she was able and available for the two week period ending August 27, 2011 if she had not been released to return to work and her repeated response was that she was "trying to return to work."

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, subsection 10, 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).

Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

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.

The administrative law judge concludes that the appellant's 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 section 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 unemployment insurance decision dated September 16, 2011, reference 02, is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. Benefits are denied.

Susan D. Ackerman
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/kjw