

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

SHANNON M CHRISTOPHER
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 07A-UI-09190-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

MARRIOTT HOTEL SERVICES INC
Employer

**OC: 08/05/07 R: 03
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the September 17, 2007, reference 02, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on October 15, 2007. Claimant did not respond to the hearing notice instructions and did not participate. Employer participated through Loretta Myers.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a full time cook from July 31, 2006 until July 28, 2007, when she was discharged. She called in to report her absence due to a lack of child care on July 28. Employer warned her that her job was in jeopardy most recently on July 6 because of tardiness on June 30, July 5, and 6, 2007, and suspended her for three days. When she returned to work, she signed a “second chance agreement” on July 10, 2007. Other written warnings were issued on February 2, 2007, and June 19 and June 22, 2007. Claimant was also tardy on January 6, 7, 11, 13, 22, 23, June 1, 2, 3, 6, 13, 14, 15, and 22, 2007.

The claimant has received unemployment benefits since filing a claim with an effective date of August 5, 2007.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct.

Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

871 IAC 24.32(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. The term "absenteeism" also encompasses conduct that is more accurately referred to as "tardiness." An absence is an extended tardiness, and an incident of tardiness is a limited absence. Absences related to issues of personal responsibility such as transportation, lack of childcare, and oversleeping are not considered excused. *Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984).

An employer is entitled to expect its employees to report to work as scheduled or to be notified as to when and why the employee is unable to report to work. The employer has established that the claimant was warned that further unexcused absences could result in termination of employment and the final absence was not excused. The final absence, in combination with the claimant's history of unexcused absenteeism, is considered excessive. Benefits are withheld.

The administrative law judge further concludes claimant has been overpaid benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. 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.

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.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. Those benefits must be recovered in accordance with the provisions of Iowa law.

DECISION:

The September 17, 2007, reference 02, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to excessive, unexcused absenteeism. 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. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$2,727.00.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/kjw