

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

**STEPHANIE M BECHEN**  
Claimant

**APPEAL 17A-UI-11387-DG-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**DUBUQUE COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
Employer

**OC: 10/15/17**  
**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated November 1, 2017, (reference 01) that held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on November 28, 2017. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Phil Kramer, Human Resources Director.

**ISSUE:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on October 12, 2017. Employer discharged claimant on October 12, 2017, because claimant violated employer's attendance policy.

Claimant was discharged from employment due to a final incident of unexcused absenteeism that occurred on October 12, 2017 when the claimant failed to contact employer before she was scheduled to work. She was last warned on September 1, 2017, that she faced termination from employment upon another incident of unexcused absenteeism. Claimant was also warned on February 29, 2016. Claimant had a valid reason for missing work, but she failed to follow the employer's reporting policy.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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 employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not considered misconduct unless unexcused. 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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). Absences due to illness or injury must be properly reported in order to be excused. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). An employer's point system or no-fault absenteeism policy is not dispositive of the issue of qualification for benefits.

An employer is entitled to expect its employees to report to work as scheduled or to be notified in a timely manner as to when and why the employee is unable to report to work. The employer has credibly established that 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 claimant's history of unexcused absenteeism, is considered excessive. Benefits are withheld.

#### **DECISION:**

The November 1, 2017, (reference 01) decision is affirmed. 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.

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Duane L. Golden  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

dlg/scn