

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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**JAYNE M MERRITT**  
Claimant

**LEE COUNTY**  
Employer

**APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-06103-MT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 05/11/14**  
**Claimant: Respondent (1)**

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Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated June 4, 2014, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on July 8, 2014. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Teresa Gilbert, Home Care and Hospice Program Director; Karen Turnbull, Home Care Hospice Service Coordinator and Julie Schilling, Administrator. Exhibit One was admitted into evidence.

**ISSUE:**

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for 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 February 11, 2014.

Employer discharged claimant on February 13, 2014 because claimant allegedly acted inappropriately in a client's home. Employer accused claimant of asking a client family member out on a date. Employer also accused claimant of acting rough with the client and making inappropriate statements. Claimant did not engage in any of these inappropriate behaviors.

Employer had issued claimant prior warnings.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

Iowa Code § 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(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such 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. On the other hand 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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning rude behavior not in the best interest of employer. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because employer failed to prove the inappropriate behavior. Claimant's sworn testimony is more credible than the hearsay offered by employer. Where conflicts exist the sworn testimony will be issued greater weight. As such employer did not prove the inappropriate behavior alleged. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated June 4, 2014, reference 01, is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

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Marlon Mormann  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

mdm/pjs