

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**BELINDA L RUEFER**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-10468-S2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**APAC CUSTOMER SERVICES OF IOWA**  
Employer

**OC: 07/29/12**  
**Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Belinda Ruefer (claimant) appealed a representative's August 24, 2012 decision (reference 01) that concluded she was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because she was discharged from work with APAC Customer Services of Iowa (employer) for excessive unexcused absenteeism after having been warned. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for September 25, 2012. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Turkessa Newsone, Human Resources Generalist, and Candace Allgood, Supervisor.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on October 29, 2007, as a full-time customer service representative. The claimant signed for receipt of the employer's handbook on October 30, 2007. The employer issued the claimant written warnings on May 17, June 4, July 12 and 18, 2012, for attendance issues. The claimant was tardy seven times in 2012, for personal responsibilities and transportation issues. She was absent seven times for transportation and personal issues. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment.

On July 26, 2012, the claimant did not appear for work or notify the employer of her absence. She went to see her doctor at 9:00 a.m. but did not notify the employer that she would not appear for work at 9:30 a.m. She did not provide the employer with a doctor's note. On August 2, 2012, the employer terminated the claimant.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged for 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(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.

871 IAC 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.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer must establish not only misconduct but that there was a final incident of misconduct which precipitated the discharge. The last incident of absence was an improperly reported illness which occurred on July 26, 2012. The claimant's absence does amount to job misconduct because it was not properly reported. The claimant was discharged for misconduct. She is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

## **DECISION:**

The representative's August 24, 2012 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because the claimant was discharged from

work for misconduct. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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