

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JASON L ROLLENE
Claimant

**IOWA WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

APPEAL 21A-DUA-00999-S2-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 11/03/19
Claimant: Appellant (1R)**

PL 116-136, Sec. 2102 – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On February 9, 2021, claimant Jason L. Rollene filed a timely appeal from the Iowa Workforce Development decision dated February 5, 2021 that determined claimant was not eligible for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits. A telephone hearing was held on April 15, 2021. The claimant was properly notified of the hearing and participated personally. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUE:

Is the claimant eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed by Best Buy beginning in 2013. His employment ended on November 6, 2019, when the store permanently closed. Claimant has been unable to find employment since then.

Claimant's wife and daughter contracted COVID-19 and he was advised by a health care professional to quarantine during this period. The first quarantine period was December 25, 2020 through December 7, 2020. Claimant could not recall the dates for the second quarantine period, but it was at the beginning of January 2020.

Claimant filed his initial claim for regular unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of November 3, 2019. Claimant is not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits funded by the State of Iowa due to a disqualification decision dated January 25, 2021. Claimant filed his PUA application on January 31, 2021.

The administrative record shows that claimant continues to receive Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons set forth below, the Iowa Workforce Development decision dated February 5, 2021 that determined claimant was not eligible for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is affirmed.

Public Law 116-136, Sec. 2102 provides for unemployment benefit assistance to any covered individual for any weeks beginning on or after January 27, 2020 and ending on or before December 31, 2020, during which the individual is unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable to work due to COVID-19. That period was subsequently extended through the week ending March 13, 2021 and, in some cases, through the week ending April 10, 2021. See Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. For claims filed after December 27, 2020, the PUA claimant can only be backdated to December 6, 2020 and retroactive benefits may not be awarded prior to that date. See Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 16-20, Change 5.

The issue to be determined here is whether claimant is a “covered individual” within the meaning of applicable law.

(3) COVERED INDIVIDUAL.—The term “covered individual”—

(A) means an individual who—

(i) is not eligible for regular compensation or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107, including an individual who has exhausted all rights to regular unemployment or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107; and

(ii) provides self-certification that the individual—

(I) is otherwise able to work and available for work within the meaning of applicable State law, except the individual is unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because—

(aa) the individual has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;

(bb) a member of the individual's household has been diagnosed with COVID-19;

(cc) the individual is providing care for a family member or a member of the individual's household who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;

(dd) a child or other person in the household for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency and such school or facility care is required for the individual to work;

(ee) the individual is unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;

(ff) the individual is unable to reach the place of employment because the individual has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;

(gg) the individual was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;

(hh) the individual has become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID-19;

(ii) the individual has to quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID-19;

(jj) the individual's place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency; or

(kk) the individual meets any additional criteria established by the Secretary for unemployment assistance under this section; or

(ll) is self-employed, is seeking part-time employment, does not have sufficient work history, or otherwise would not qualify for regular unemployment or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107 and meets the requirements of subclause (l); and

(B) does not include—

(i) an individual who has the ability to telework with pay; or

(ii) an individual who is receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave benefits, regardless of whether the individual meets a qualification described in items (aa) through (kk) of subparagraph (A)(i)(l).

The U.S. Department of Labor has provided guidance on PUA eligibility to state workforce agencies. In Unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 16-20, Change 2, the following guidance was issued:

14. Question: If an individual becomes unemployed for reasons unrelated to COVID-19, and now is unable to find work because businesses have closed or are not hiring due to COVID-19, is he or she eligible for PUA?

Answer: No. An individual is only eligible for PUA if the individual is otherwise able to work and available to work but is unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable for work for a listed COVID-19 related reason under Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I) of the CARES Act. Not being able to find a job because some businesses have closed and/or may not be hiring due to COVID-19 is not an identified reason.

In this case, the claimant is ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits funded by the State of Iowa pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.4(4)a effective November 1, 2020. This is due to a disqualifying decision dated January 25, 2021. Claimant therefore meets the requirements of PL 116-136 Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(i); however, he must also meet the requirements of PL 116-136 Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii) to qualify as a "covered individual" under the CARES Act.

PL 116-136 Section 2102(a)(3)(A)(ii)(I) establishes that the claimant must provide self-certification that he is otherwise able to work and available for work within the meaning of applicable State law, except that he is unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because of one of the enumerated reasons listed in (aa) through (II). Here, claimant's employment ended in 2019, prior to the pandemic. While he has been unable to find work since that time, it is not a direct result of the COVID-19 public health emergency itself under the law. Further, while claimant was required to quarantine by a health care professional due to COVID-19 exposure, the quarantine period occurred during the period when claimant was receiving regular state unemployment benefits so he would not have been eligible for PUA benefits. As such, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits are denied.

The issue of whether claimant continues to be eligible for FPUC benefits shall be remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and determination.

DECISION:

The Iowa Workforce Development decision dated February 5, 2021 that determined claimant was not eligible for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits is affirmed.

REMAND:

The issue of whether claimant continues to be eligible for FPUC benefits shall be remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and determination.



Stephanie Adkisson
Administrative Law Judge

April 22, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

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