

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

RYAN S HOFFMAN-KRINGLEN
Claimant

TARGET CORPORATION
Employer

APPEAL NO. 21A-UI-21237-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 08/15/21
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated September 17, 2021, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on November 16, 2021. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Jeff Steenbarger and Lauren Smith. Employer's exhibits 1-2 were admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

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 August 6, 2021. Employer discharged claimant on August 8, 2021 because claimant used offensive slurs to a coworker that he yelled at after he was told by that coworker that he was moving too slowly.

Claimant worked as a full time team member for employer. At the time of his hire, his onboarding included trainings concerning respectful actions towards coworkers. On June 9, 2021 claimant received a verbal warning after yelling foul words that were heard outside the back area where claimant worked in the store.

On August 6, 2021 claimant was upset when a coworker asked that he work more quickly. Claimant yelled at the coworker, calling him a "fucking faggot." Multiple coworkers heard claimant's statement and went to management with their complaints. Claimant was taken into the office and he admitted to saying the words, although he argued that no one could hear him as he was talking softly to one other person. Claimant was terminated for violating employer's policies on treating a coworker with respect.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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 disqualification shall continue 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).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

It is the duty of the administrative law judge as the trier of fact in this case, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007). The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa Ct. App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *State v. Holtz*, Id. In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other believable evidence; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *State v. Holtz*, Id. Here, claimant's testimony that he was simply talking to a friend was not believable and claimant's credibility was

lost when he stated he hadn't been verbally warned for like actions a couple of months earlier, only to refute his own testimony through later statements.

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 established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning offensive statements to coworkers.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant knew he wasn't to speak in this manner, but chose to continue to do so when he got upset. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated September 17, 2021, reference 01, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.



Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

__December 22, 2021__
Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/mh