

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**TYANA M BRIGGS**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-11410-H2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**HANDICAPPED DEVELOPMENT CENTER**  
Employer

**Original Claim: 09-28-08  
Claimant: Respondent (2-R)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the July 30, 2009, reference 05, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on August 25, 2009. The claimant did participate. The employer did participate through Courtney Brankovic, CRS Program Director, and Dianna Hamm, Assistant Program Director. Employer's Exhibit One was received.

**ISSUES:**

Was the claimant discharged for work-related misconduct?

Has the claimant been overpaid any unemployment insurance benefits?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed the testimony and all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a support staff worker, full-time, beginning January 22, 2009, through June 25, 2009, when she was discharged.

When she was hired, the claimant was given a copy of the employer's handbook or policy manual, including their drug and alcohol manual. The claimant was involved in an altercation with another employee. The other employee alleged that the claimant was sending her text messages requesting drugs. The claimant denies sending any such text messages. When confronted by the employer about the allegations on June 23, the claimant reported that while working with the complaining coworker a few weeks prior, she witnessed the coworker in the bathroom sniffing a white powder up her nose. The claimant reported the incident to the employer only when this same coworker made allegations about the drug-seeking text messages. After witnessing a coworker using drugs, the claimant did not report her suspicions to the employer immediately after the event. When asked by the employer why she had not reported her coworker's drug use at the workplace, the claimant said she did not want to be a snitch.

As a support worker the claimant was responsible for the safety and well being of those in her care.

The claimant has received unemployment benefits since filing a claim with an effective date of September 28, 2008.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct.

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.

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.

The claimant had received the employer's policies and knew she was responsible for the health and safety of those in her care. She knew or should have known that her failure to report a coworker doing illegal drugs in the bathroom was conduct not in the employer's best interests. The claimant only reported the incident when the same employee made accusations against her. The claimant's constitutes disqualifying misconduct. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be

credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. The employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. The matter of determining whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

**DECISION:**

The July 30, 2009, reference 05, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. 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. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$531.00. The matter of determining whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

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Teresa K. Hillary  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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