

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

CHRISTIAN HOLMES

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 12A-UI-09320-BT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

FARLEY'S & SATHERS CANDY CO INC

Employer

OC: 07/01/12

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a - Discharge for Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) - Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Christian Holmes (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated July 27, 2012, reference 01, which held that he was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from Farley's & Sathers Candy Company, Inc. (employer) for work-related misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on August 27, 2012. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Robin Travis, Human Resources Manager. Employer's Exhibits One and Two was admitted into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits.

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 employed full-time from September 2, 2003 through June 8, 2012 when he was discharged for violation of the attendance policy. He was hired as an auxiliary or back up worker but shortly thereafter became a dosier sanding line operator. The employer had a nine-month rotating attendance calendar until April 1, 2012 after which it put into place a 12-month rotating calendar. Employees are discharged if they accumulate eight attendance points. Points are assessed for different incidents and the amount ranges from a half point up to two points for a no-call/no-show.

The claimant always worked third shift from 11:00 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. As with all employees, sometimes he had to work mandatory overtime which meant he had to start work four hours early or continue working four hours after his shift ended. The claimant received eight written warnings for attendance from November 11, 2011 through May 21, 2012. The warnings included the 'drop off date' when each occurrence was scheduled to drop off his record. The

final warning issued on May 21, 2012 confirmed he had 7.5 attendance points. He received another 1.5 attendance points on June 6, 2012 when he was late less than four hours without calling the employer.

The claimant testified he had difficulty sleeping so took a medication called Ambien/Zolpidem which made it hard to wake up and contributed to his tardiness. However, he has no medical restrictions and did not provide any medical documentation to the employer. Prior to the final incident, the claimant was late for work once in the previous three months.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. 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.

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.

The employer has the burden to prove the discharged employee is disqualified for benefits for misconduct. *Sallis v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, 437 N.W.2d 895, 896 (Iowa 1989). The claimant was discharged on June 8, 2012 for excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and

shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer. See 871 IAC 24.32(7).

The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. The term "absenteeism" also encompasses conduct that is more accurately referred to as "tardiness." An absence is an extended tardiness, and an incident of tardiness is a limited absence. Absences related to issues of personal responsibility such as transportation, lack of childcare, and oversleeping are not considered excused. *Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984).

The employer has established that the claimant was warned that further unexcused absences could result in termination of employment and the final absence was not excused. The final absence, in combination with the claimant's history of absenteeism, is considered excessive. Benefits are denied.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated July 27, 2012, reference 01, is affirmed. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from work for misconduct. Benefits are withheld until he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible.

Susan D. Ackerman
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/pjs