

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

**GARRETT W THOMAS**  
Claimant

**SEATS INCORPORATED**  
Employer

**APPEAL 21A-UI-07039-DG-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 01/03/21  
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work  
Iowa Code § 96.19(38)b – Definitions – Total, partial unemployment  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(2)j – Benefit Eligibility Conditions – Leave of Absence  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) – Availability Disqualifications – Leave of Absence

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated March 3, 2021, (reference 02) that held claimant not able to and available for work. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on May 18, 2021. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Kelly Rafajko, Employee Relations Manager. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

**ISSUE:**

The issue in this matter is whether claimant is able and available for work?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant was not able to work and available to work beginning on January 3, 2021 because he was placed on a leave of absence from work after he was exposed to the covid-19 virus.

Claimant began working for employer as a full-time tool and die maintenance worker on December 26, 2019. On or about January 3, 2021 claimant was placed on a leave of absence from work because he had been in the same household with a family member who had covid-19.

Employer granted the leave request, and he is still employed as of the date of this hearing. Employer has had continuing work available for claimant as contemplated at the time of hire.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

Iowa Code section 96.4(3) provides:

An unemployed individual shall be eligible to receive benefits with respect to any week only if the department finds that:

3. The individual is able to work, is available for work, and is earnestly and actively seeking work. This subsection is waived if the individual is deemed partially unemployed, while employed at the individual's regular job, as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "b", unnumbered paragraph (1), or temporarily unemployed as defined in section 96.19, subsection 38, paragraph "c". The work search requirements of this subsection and the disqualification requirement for failure to apply for, or to accept suitable work of section 96.5, subsection 3 are waived if the individual is not disqualified for benefits under section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraph "h".

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1)a provides:

**Benefits eligibility conditions.** For an individual to be eligible to receive benefits the department must find that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work. The individual bears the burden of establishing that the individual is able to work, available for work, and earnestly and actively seeking work.

**(1) Able to work.** An individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood.

*a. Illness, injury or pregnancy.* Each case is decided upon an individual basis, recognizing that various work opportunities present different physical requirements. A statement from a medical practitioner is considered prima facie evidence of the physical ability of the individual to perform the work required. A pregnant individual must meet the same criteria for determining ableness as do all other individuals.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(35) provides:

**Availability disqualifications.** The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

**(35)** Where the claimant is not able to work and is under the care of a medical practitioner and has not been released as being able to work.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.23(10) provides:

Availability disqualifications. The following are reasons for a claimant being disqualified for being unavailable for work.

(10) The claimant requested and was granted a leave of absence, such period is deemed to be a period of voluntary unemployment and shall be considered ineligible for benefits for such period.

Iowa Code section 96.19(38) provides:

*"Total and partial unemployment".*

*a.* An individual shall be deemed *"totally unemployed"* in any week with respect to which no wages are payable to the individual and during which the individual performs no services.

*b.* An individual shall be deemed partially unemployed in any week in which either of the following apply:

(1) While employed at the individual's then regular job, the individual works less than the regular full-time week and in which the individual earns less than the individual's weekly benefit amount plus fifteen dollars.

(2) The individual, having been separated from the individual's regular job, earns at odd jobs less than the individual's weekly benefit amount plus fifteen dollars.

c. An individual shall be deemed temporarily unemployed if for a period, verified by the department, not to exceed four consecutive weeks, the individual is unemployed due to a plant shutdown, vacation, inventory, lack of work or emergency from the individual's regular job or trade in which the individual worked full-time and will again work full-time, if the individual's employment, although temporarily suspended, has not been terminated.

To be able to work, "[a]n individual must be physically and mentally able to work in some gainful employment, not necessarily in the individual's customary occupation, but which is engaged in by others as a means of livelihood." *Sierra v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 508 N.W.2d 719, 721 (Iowa 1993); *Geiken v. Lutheran Home for the Aged*, 468 N.W.2d 223 (Iowa 1991); Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(1). "An evaluation of an individual's ability to work for the purposes of determining that individual's eligibility for unemployment benefits must necessarily take into consideration the economic and legal forces at work in the general labor market in which the individual resides." *Sierra* at 723. This means that when evaluating whether a person with a protected disability is able and available to work we must take into account the reasonable accommodation requirements imposed on employers under federal, state, and local laws. *Id.*

Here, employer has work available for claimant. However, claimant was not available to work because he had to self-quarantine after he had been near a person who had been diagnosed with covid-19. Employer allowed claimant time off work during that period of time. Claimant has not established he is able to and available for work, even under the United State Department of Labor's guidance to flexibly interpret this requirement. See unemployment Insurance Program Letter No. 10-20.

Claimant is considered to be on a leave of absence after he had been around a person who had been diagnosed with covid-19, and is not available for work. Claimant is not eligible for regular, state-funded unemployment insurance benefits. Benefits are denied.

**NOTE TO CLAIMANT:** This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits. If you disagree with this decision you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits, but who are unemployed or continue to be unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>. If this decision becomes final or if you are not eligible for PUA, you may have an overpayment of benefits.

**ATTENTION:** On May 11, 2021, Governor Reynolds announced that Iowa will end its participation in federal pandemic-related unemployment benefit programs effective June 12, 2021. The last payable week for PUA in Iowa will be the week ending June 12, 2021. Additional information can be found in the press release at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/iowa-end-participation-federal-unemployment-benefit-programs-citing-strong-labor-market-and>.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated March 3, 2021, (reference 02) is affirmed. Claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.



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Duane L. Golden  
Administrative Law Judge

May 28, 2021  
Decision Dated and Mailed

dlg/scn