

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JENNIFER K PRUETT

Claimant

APPEAL 18A-UI-08367-LJ-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

FOCUS FAMILY OPTIONS & CMTY

Employer

OC: 07/01/18

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

Iowa Code § 96.5(1)d – Voluntary Quitting/Illness or Injury

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25(35) – Separation Due to Illness or Injury

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the July 18, 2018, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon a determination that claimant quit her employment due to a non-work-related illness or injury. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephonic hearing was held on August 28, 2018. The claimant, Jennifer K. Pruett, participated. The employer, Focus Family Options and Community Supports, participated through Kelly Lea, Home-Based Habilitation Program Director. Claimant's Exhibit A was received and admitted into the record without objection. Department's Exhibits D1 and D2 were admitted into the record.

ISSUES:

Is the appeal timely?

Did claimant voluntarily quit the employment with good cause attributable to employer?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: A disqualification decision was mailed to claimant's last known address of record on July 18, 2018. She did receive the decision within ten days. The first sentence of the decision states, "If this decision denies benefits and is not reversed on appeal, it may result in an overpayment which you will be required to repay." The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Bureau by July 28, 2018. The appeal was not filed until August 6, 2018, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. Claimant explained that she resides both at the Council Bluffs address where she receives her mail and also at a residence in Blair, Nebraska. At the time the decision arrived, claimant was staying at the Blair residence. Claimant learned of the decision from her grandmother, who owns the Council Bluffs residence. When claimant returned to Council Bluffs, she got the decision and filed her appeal.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant failed to file a timely appeal.

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. *Initial determination.* A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 10, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Bd. of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 217 N.W.2d 255

(Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979). While the administrative law judge has sympathy for claimant in her current circumstances, there is nothing in the Iowa Code or administrative regulations that allows the administrative law judge to find that this appeal was timely filed.

DECISION:

The July 18, 2018, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. Claimant failed to file a timely appeal in this matter. The decision of the representative remains in effect.

Elizabeth A. Johnson
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

lj/scn