

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**TIMOTHY GRADFORD**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 12A-UI-11837-BT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**DES STAFFING SERVICES INC**  
Employer

**OC: 08/19/12**  
**Claimant: Respondent (4/R)**

Iowa Code § 96.4-3 - Availability for Work  
Iowa Code § 96.5-3-a - Refusal of Suitable Work  
Iowa Code § 96.3-7 - Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

DES Staffing Services, Inc. (employer) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated September 21, 2012, reference 02, which held that Timothy Gradford (claimant) was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on October 25, 2012. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Stacy Navarro, human resources coordinator, and Cassidy Davis, placement specialist. 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 is able and available and, if so, whether he refused a suitable offer of work.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and having considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The employer worked as a general laborer and was assigned to JRS at a pay rate of \$9.00 per hour. He worked there from October 14, 2011 through August 21, 2012, when the assignment was completed. The employer subsequently contacted him and offered him three additional assignments. He was offered work on August 24, 2012 at a call center with a pay rate of \$7.75 per hour and he declined this job offer because he did not like this type of work. The employer offered him another position on that same date with CCB Packaging at an hourly rate of \$8.00 and he declined this position because he could not start his shift at 7:00 a.m., since the bus does not run that early.

The employer offered him a position at White Glove Movers with a pay rate of \$11.00 per hour. The claimant accepted this position and was scheduled to start work on September 4, 2012, but he missed the bus and did not report to the assignment. Consequently, the employer lost its account with this client.

The claimant filed a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective August 19, 2012 and has received benefits after the separation from employment.

### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The first issue in this case is whether the claimant is able and available for work.

Iowa Code § 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".

871 IAC 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.

(2) Available for work. The availability requirement is satisfied when an individual is willing, able, and ready to accept suitable work which the individual does not have good cause to refuse, that is, the individual is genuinely attached to the labor market. Since, under unemployment insurance laws, it is the availability of an individual that is required to be tested, the labor market must be described in terms of the individual. A labor market for an individual means a market for the type of service which the individual offers in the geographical area in which the individual offers the service. Market in that sense does not mean that job vacancies must exist; the purpose of unemployment insurance is to compensate for lack of job vacancies. It means only that the type of services which an individual is offering is generally performed in the geographical area in which the individual is offering the services.

The claimant does appear to be able and available to work. Another aspect of the able and available issue in this case is whether the claimant unreasonably rejected an offer of suitable work. An individual who refuses recall to suitable work is disqualified from receiving job insurance benefits.

Iowa Code § 96.5-3-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

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3. Failure to accept work. If the department finds that an individual has failed, without good cause, either to apply for available, suitable work when directed by the department or to accept suitable work when offered that individual. The department shall, if possible, furnish the individual with the names of employers which are seeking employees. The individual shall apply to and obtain the signatures of the employers designated by the department on forms provided by the department. However, the employers may refuse to sign the forms. The individual's failure to obtain the signatures of designated employers, which have not refused to sign the forms, shall disqualify the individual for benefits until requalified. To requalify for benefits after disqualification under this subsection, the individual shall work in and be paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

a. In determining whether or not any work is suitable for an individual, the department shall consider the degree of risk involved to the individual's health, safety, and morals, the individual's physical fitness, prior training, length of unemployment, and prospects for securing local work in the individual's customary occupation, the distance of the available work from the individual's residence, and any other factor which the department finds bears a reasonable relation to the purposes of this paragraph. Work is suitable if the work meets all the other criteria of this paragraph and if the gross weekly wages for the work equal or exceed the following percentages of the individual's average weekly wage for insured work paid to the individual during that quarter of the individual's base period in which the individual's wages were highest:

- (1) One hundred percent, if the work is offered during the first five weeks of unemployment.
- (2) Seventy-five percent, if the work is offered during the sixth through the twelfth week of unemployment.
- (3) Seventy percent, if the work is offered during the thirteenth through the eighteenth week of unemployment.
- (4) Sixty-five percent, if the work is offered after the eighteenth week of unemployment.

However, the provisions of this paragraph shall not require an individual to accept employment below the federal minimum wage.

The first two offers of employment were made during the claimant's first week of unemployment. Inasmuch as the claimant was offered employment with wages which did not equal 100 percent of his average weekly wage paid during the highest quarter of his base period, the administrative law judge does not consider the work offered by the employer to be suitable work within the meaning of the law. Since the claimant did not refuse a suitable offer of work, he is qualified for benefits for the two-week period ending September 1, 2012, provided he is otherwise eligible.

However, the third offer of employment made on September 4, 2012 did equal 100 percent of his average weekly wage. The claimant effectively refused this job offer by failing to report as scheduled. The fact that he missed his bus does not change the outcome, since he knew when the busses ran and should have been prepared to get to work on his first day of employment. His actions led to the employer losing that particular account. The claimant's separation from employment as of September 4, 2012 was without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are denied thereafter.

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) 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. The overpayment recovery law was updated in 2008. See Iowa Code § 96.3(7)(b). Under the revised law, a claimant will not be required to repay an overpayment of benefits if all of the following factors are met. First, the prior award of benefits must have been made in connection with a decision regarding the claimant's separation from a particular employment. Second, the claimant must not have engaged in fraud or willful misrepresentation to obtain the benefits or in connection with the Agency's initial decision to award benefits. Third, the employer must not have participated at the initial fact-finding proceeding that resulted in the initial decision to award benefits. If Workforce Development determines there has been an overpayment of benefits, the employer will not be charged for the benefits, regardless of whether the claimant is required to repay the benefits.

Because the claimant has been deemed ineligible for benefits, any benefits the claimant has received could constitute an overpayment. Accordingly, the administrative law judge will remand the matter to the Claims Division for determination of whether there has been an overpayment, the amount of the overpayment, and whether the claimant will have to repay the benefits.

**DECISION:**

The unemployment insurance decision dated September 21, 2012, reference 02, is modified in favor of the appellant. The claimant did refuse a suitable offer of work by failing to report to work on September 4, 2012. Benefits are withheld as of September 8, 2012 until such time as the claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The matter is remanded to the Claims Section for investigation and determination of the overpayment issue.

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Susan D. Ackerman  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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