

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

MATTHEW J MEINERS
Claimant

APPEAL 21R-DUA-00121-JC-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

OC: 06/28/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

PL 116-136, Sec. 2012 – Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance
20 CFR 625 – Disaster Unemployment Assistance

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On October 8, 2020, the claimant filed a timely appeal from the Iowa Workforce Development decision dated September 27, 2020 that determined claimant was not eligible for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) benefits.

A first telephone hearing was scheduled but not conducted on November 20, 2020. Claimant did not appear for the hearing and his appeal was dismissed. Upon successful request for reopening to the Employment Appeal Board, the matter was remanded for a new hearing. See Appeal 20A-DUA-00636-JC-T.

After proper notice, a telephone hearing was held on February 5, 2021. The claimant participated personally. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative records.

ISSUE:

Is the claimant eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: In March 2020, the United States declared a public health emergency based on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Claimant filed a claim for state unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of June 28, 2020. Claimant is self-employed and has no insured wages in his monetary record. Therefore, claimant is not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits.

Claimant's address of record at the time of filing his claim, and his updated address are both in Illinois. Claimant stated he has worked in self-employment under the name M&M Inc. Construction "off and on" for the past three years. Claimant's application stated his company is called Territory Properties. Claimant asserted he previously worked up to 50 hours per week and earned \$1,000.00 per week. This was inconsistent with information claimant provided from his tax documents regarding his earnings.

Claimant stated his work is both in Illinois and Iowa (in Dubuque). Claimant's main customers are residential homeowners. Claimant stated due to the travel ban in Illinois, that he could not perform work and lost income. Claimant listed his last day worked as February 15, 2020.

No one in claimant's household has been diagnosed with Covid-19, although claimant has had other family members exposed or diagnosed with COVID-19. Claimant's fiancé stays homes with their children and assists with online schooling.

Claimant also was unable to work for a period due to his grandfather passing away in summer 2020 and for caring for his mother. Claimant has no other barriers to employment. Claimant has not had symptoms of Covid-19. Claimant did not provide any dates of being quarantined based upon medical guidance, or being restricted from performing work as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initial decision denying claimant's request for PUA benefits was mailed to his address of record on September 27, 2020 and contained a warning that an appeal must be filed by October 8, 2020. Claimant filed his appeal on October 8, 2020. Therefore, it is timely.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons set forth below, the administrative law judge finds that claimant is not eligible for PUA benefits.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, Public Law 116-136, Sec. 2102 provides for unemployment benefit assistance to any covered individual for any weeks beginning on or after January 27, 2020 and ending on or before December 31, 2020, during which the individual is unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable to work due to COVID-19.

The Continued Assistance for Unemployed Workers Act of 2020 (enacted December 27, 2020) extended PUA benefits for weeks of unemployment through March 14, 2021, with a phase out period through April 10, 2021.

The issue to be determined here is whether claimant is a "covered individual" within the meaning of applicable law.

Section 2102(a)(3) defines individuals who are eligible for PUA benefits.

(3) COVERED INDIVIDUAL.—The term "covered individual"—

(A) means an individual who—

(i) is not eligible for regular compensation or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107, including an individual who has exhausted all rights to regular unemployment or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107; and

(ii) provides self-certification that the individual—

(I) is otherwise able to work and available for work within the meaning of applicable State law, except the individual is unemployed, partially unemployed, or unable or unavailable to work because—

(aa) the individual has been diagnosed with COVID–19 or is experiencing symptoms of COVID–19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;

(bb) a member of the individual’s household has been diagnosed with COVID–19;

(cc) the individual is providing care for a family member or a member of the individual’s household who has been diagnosed with COVID–19;

(dd) a child or other person in the household for which the individual has primary caregiving responsibility is unable to attend school or another facility that is closed as a direct result of the COVID–19 public health emergency and such school or facility care is required for the individual to work;

(ee) the individual is unable to reach the place of employment because of a quarantine imposed as a direct result of the COVID–19 public health emergency;

(ff) the individual is unable to reach the place of employment because the individual has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID–19;

(gg) the individual was scheduled to commence employment and does not have a job or is unable to reach the job as a direct result of the COVID–19 public health emergency;

(hh) the individual has become the breadwinner or major support for a household because the head of the household has died as a direct result of COVID–19;

(ii) the individual has to quit his or her job as a direct result of COVID–19;

(jj) the individual’s place of employment is closed as a direct result of the COVID–19 public health emergency; or

(kk) the individual meets any additional criteria established by the Secretary for unemployment assistance under this section; or

(II) is self-employed, is seeking part-time employment, does not have sufficient work history, or otherwise would not qualify for regular unemployment or extended benefits under State or Federal law or pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107 and meets the requirements of subclause (I); and

(B) does not include—

(i) an individual who has the ability to telework with pay; or

(ii) an individual who is receiving paid sick leave or other paid leave benefits, regardless of whether the individual meets a qualification described in items (aa) through (kk) of subparagraph (A)(i)(I).

An individual must be unemployed and the unemployment must be caused by a major disaster. 20 CFR 625.4.

Title 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations, section 626.2(t) defines an unemployed self-employed individual as follows:

(t) Unemployed self-employed individual means an individual who was self-employed in or was to commence self-employment in the major disaster area at the time the major disaster began, and whose principal source of income and livelihood is dependent upon the individual's performance of service in self-employment, and whose unemployment is caused by a major disaster as provided in § 625.5(b).

Title 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations, section 626.5(b) and (c) provide:

(b) Unemployed self-employed individual. The unemployment of an unemployed self-employed individual is caused by a major disaster if—

(1) The individual has a “week of unemployment” as defined in § 625.2(w)(2) following the “date the major disaster began” as defined in § 625.2(e), and such unemployment is a direct result of the major disaster; or

(2) The individual is unable to reach the place where services as a self-employed individual are performed, as a direct result of the major disaster; or

(3) The individual was to commence regular services as a self-employed individual, but does not have a place or is unable to reach the place where the services as a self-employed individual were to be performed, as a direct result of the major disaster; or

(4) The individual cannot perform services as a self-employed individual because of an injury caused as a direct result of the major disaster.

(c) Unemployment is a direct result of the major disaster. For the purposes of paragraphs (a)(1) and (b)(1) of this section, a worker's or self-employed individual's unemployment is a direct result of the major disaster where the unemployment is an immediate result of the major disaster itself, and not the result of a longer chain of events precipitated or exacerbated by the disaster. Such an individual's unemployment is a direct result of the major disaster if the unemployment resulted from:

(1) The physical damage or destruction of the place of employment;

(2) The physical inaccessibility of the place of employment in the major disaster area due to its closure by or at the request of the federal, state or local government, in immediate response to the disaster; or

(3) Lack of work, or loss of revenues, provided that, prior to the disaster, the employer, or the business in the case of a self-employed individual, received at

least a majority of its revenue or income from an entity in the major disaster area that was either damaged or destroyed in the disaster, or an entity in the major disaster area closed by the federal, state or local government in immediate response to the disaster.

Claimant in this case is not eligible for regular state benefits based upon a lack of qualified insured wages, as he is self-employed.

It is the duty of the administrative law judge as the trier of fact in this case, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007). The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *Id.* In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other believable evidence; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *Id.* The administrative law judge carefully evaluated claimant's statements, which were inconsistent at times, along with the administrative records. Assessing the credibility of the witnesses and reliability of the evidence in conjunction with the applicable burden of proof, as shown in the factual conclusions reached in the above-noted findings of fact, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant has not presented sufficient evidence to establish his eligibility for PUA benefits.

The administrative law judge has reviewed the facts and applicable laws carefully, and although the administrative law judge is very sympathetic to claimant's situation, he does not meet the definition of an unemployed worker who is entitled to PUA benefits under the law, as outlined above. Claimant's unemployment was not caused by COVID-19, although it may be the result of a longer chain of events precipitated or exacerbated by COVID-19. The request for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance is denied.

DECISION:

The Iowa Workforce Development decision dated September 27, 2020 that determined claimant was not eligible for federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) is affirmed.

Jennifer L. Beckman

Jennifer L. Beckman
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
Iowa Workforce Development
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax 515-478-3528

February 24, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

jlb/mh

NOTE TO CLAIMANT: You may find additional information about food, housing, and other resources by dialing 211 or at <https://dhs.iowa.gov/node/3250>