

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

ARMANDO GONZALEZ
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 08A-UI-07620-C

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

JAMES R HARMEYER INC
Employer

**OC: 05/18/08 R: 02
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Section 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeals

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Armando Gonzalez filed an appeal from a representative's decision dated June 27, 2008, reference 01, which denied benefits based on his separation from James R Harmeyer, Inc. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on September 23, 2008 in Des Moines, Iowa. Mr. Gonzalez participated personally and was represented by Robert Wright, Jr., Attorney at Law, who offered additional testimony from Moises Alegria and Hugo Negrete. The employer participated by James Harmeyer, Owner. Mr. Gonzalez' appeal was admitted as Division Exhibit I. Patricia Vargos-Ver Ploeg participated as the interpreter.

ISSUE:

At issue in this matter is whether the appeal filed herein was timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: A disqualification decision was mailed to Mr. Gonzalez's last-known address of record on June 27, 2008. Mr. Gonzalez received the decision on June 28, 2008. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by July 7, 2008. The appeal was not filed until August 22, 2008, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision.

Mr. Gonzalez does not read English very well. His wife reads some English but was not able to explain the decision to him. Mr. Gonzalez had filed his initial claim for job insurance benefits at his local office where he was assisted by an interpreter on staff. He did not take the disqualifying decision to his local office for interpretation. He filed his appeal at his local office on August 22, 2008.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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. Board of Adjustment, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. Messina v. IDJS, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

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. IDJS, 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. IDJS, 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. IESC, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); Smith v. IESC, 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 appreciates that there is a language barrier in that Mr. Gonzalez does not read English very well. However, he knew he did not understand the disqualifying decision but did not immediately take effective steps to have it translated. He knew a translator was available at his local Workforce Development office because one assisted him when he initially filed his claim. He waited almost two months after receiving the decision before obtaining a translation that alerted him to the need to file an appeal. A language barrier might explain a delay of a few days, but not a delay of almost two months. A longer delay might be excused if the individual was unaware of resources for obtaining a translation. In the case at hand, Mr. Gonzalez' language barrier was not justification for the substantial delay in filing the appeal since he was aware of resources he could avail himself of in order to have the decision translated.

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 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code section 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. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The representative's decision dated June 27, 2008, reference 01, is hereby affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely and the decision of the representative remains in effect. Benefits are withheld until such time as Mr. Gonzalez has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly job insurance benefit amount, provided he satisfies all other conditions of eligibility.

Carolyn F. Coleman
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

cfc/pjs