

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

LAUREL MILLER
4107 S UNION
DES MOINES IA 50315

THE MEMBERS GROUP INC
PO BOX 10409
DES MOINES IA 50306-0409

Appeal Number: 06A-UI-01111-ET
OC: 01-01-06 R: 02
Claimant: Respondent (1)

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the January 23, 2006, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on February 15, 2006. The claimant participated in the hearing. Pamela Bair, Vice-President of Human Resources and Amy Ruggles, Card Services Manager, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time card services project consultant for The Members Group from November 11, 2003 to January 5, 2006. It is standard operating procedure in financial institutions to require employees to take five consecutive days off so any irregularities will show up. Because the claimant had not taken her time off yet she had to take five days off at the end of December 2005. While she was gone the employer discovered she had not been monitoring the plastic inventory since November 2005. The claimant returned to work January 3, 2006, and was suspended two days with pay. During the suspension the employer learned the claimant also neglected to monitor cardholder agreements and inserts for plastic. The claimant testified she usually did the plastic inventory at the end of each month and considered her usual duties important but was working on a problem involving a special project and considered those duties urgent. She further testified she believed her other regular tasks were up to date before she left for her five days off. After reviewing the situation the employer terminated the claimant's employment January 5, 2006.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

871 IAC 24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith

errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proving disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). While the claimant admits she made a mistake by failing to do the plastic inventory in November, it appears to be an error in judgment rather intentional misconduct. Failure to perform to the employer's expectations, even when those expectations are reasonable, does not necessarily constitute misconduct. The claimant felt overwhelmed between her regular duties, which she deemed "important" and the problem on the new project which she deemed "urgent." Although she may have made a poor choice in focusing on the urgent problem and neglecting at least one area of her regular work, it appears she failed to do the plastic inventory one time rather than several and consequently, the administrative law judge cannot conclude that her actions rise to the level of disqualifying job misconduct as defined by Iowa law. Therefore, benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The January 23, 2006, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

je/pjs