

- DECISION -

Claimant:
TINA WILLIAMS

Decision No.: 4272-BR-13

Date: September 30, 2013

Appeal No.: 1321815

Employer:
UNITED HEALTHCARE SERVICES INC

S.S. No.:

L.O. No.: 63

Appellant: Claimant

Issue: Whether the claimant left work voluntarily, without good cause within the meaning of Maryland Code, Labor and Employment Article, Title 8, Section 1001.

- NOTICE OF RIGHT OF APPEAL TO COURT -

You may file an appeal from this decision in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City or one of the Circuit Courts in a county in Maryland. The court rules about how to file the appeal can be found in many public libraries, in the Maryland Rules of Procedure, Title 7, Chapter 200.

The period for filing an appeal expires: October 30, 2013

REVIEW OF THE RECORD

After a review of the record, the Board deletes the word "allegedly" from the last sentence in the August 20, 2013 decision's findings of fact. The Board also corrects the claimant's first day of work to May 29, 2012. The Board adopts the hearing examiner's modified findings of fact and reverses the hearing examiner's decision.

The General Assembly declared that, in its considered judgment, the public good and the general welfare of the citizens of the State required the enactment of the Unemployment Insurance Law, under the police powers of the State, for the compulsory setting aside of unemployment reserves to be used for the benefit of individuals unemployed through no fault of their own. *Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Empl. Art., § 8-102(c)*.

Unemployment compensation laws are to be read liberally in favor of eligibility, and disqualification provisions are to be strictly construed. *Sinai Hosp. of Baltimore v. Dept. of Empl. & Training*, 309 Md. 28 (1987).

The Board reviews the record *de novo* and may affirm, modify, or reverse the findings of fact or conclusions of law of the hearing examiner on the basis of evidence submitted to the hearing examiner, or evidence that the Board may direct to be taken, or may remand any case to a hearing examiner for purposes it may direct. *Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Empl. Art., § 8-510(d)*; *COMAR 09.32.06.04*. The Board fully inquires into the facts of each particular case. *COMAR 09.32.06.03(E)(1)*.

“Due to leaving work voluntarily” has a plain, definite and sensible meaning, free of ambiguity. It expresses a clear legislative intent that to disqualify a claimant from benefits, the evidence must establish that the claimant, by his or her own choice, intentionally and of his or her own free will, terminated the employment. *Allen v. Core Target Youth Program*, 275 Md. 69 (1975). A claimant’s intent or state of mind is a factual issue for the Board of Appeals to resolve. *Dept. of Econ. & Empl. Dev. v. Taylor*, 108 Md. App. 250, 274 (1996), *aff’d sub. nom.*, 344 Md. 687 (1997). An intent to quit one’s job can be manifested by actions as well as words. *Lawson v. Security Fence Supply Company*, 1101-BH-82. In a case where medical problems are at issue, mere compliance with the requirement of supplying a written statement or other documentary evidence of a health problem does not mandate an automatic award of benefits. *Shifflet v. Dept. of Emp. & Training*, 75 Md. App. 282 (1988).

There are two categories of non-disqualifying reasons for quitting employment. When a claimant voluntarily leaves work, he has the burden of proving that he left for good cause or valid circumstances based upon a preponderance of the credible evidence in the record. *Hargrove v. City of Baltimore*, 2033-BH-83; *Chisholm v. Johns Hopkins Hospital*, 66-BR-89.

Quitting for “good cause” is the first non-disqualifying reason. *Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Empl. Art., § 8-1001(b)*. Purely personal reasons, no matter how compelling, cannot constitute good cause as a matter of law. *Bd. Of Educ. Of Montgomery County v. Paynter*, 303 Md. 22, 28 (1985). An objective standard is used to determine if the average employee would have left work in that situation; in addition, a determination is made as to whether a particular employee left in good faith, and an element of good faith is whether the claimant has exhausted all reasonable alternatives before leaving work. *Board of Educ. v. Paynter*, 303 Md. 22, 29-30 (1985)(requiring a “higher standard of proof” than for good cause because reason is not job related); *also see Bohrer v. Sheetz, Inc., Law No. 13361, (Cir. Ct. for Washington Co., Apr. 24, 1984)*. “Good cause” must be job-related and it must be a cause “which would reasonably impel the average, able-bodied, qualified worker to give up his or her employment.” *Paynter*, 303 Md. at 1193. Using this definition, the Court of Appeals held that the Board correctly applied the “objective test”: “The applicable standards are the standards of reasonableness applied to the average man or woman, and not to the supersensitive.” *Paynter*, 303 Md. at 1193.

The second category or non-disqualifying reason is quitting for “valid circumstances”. *Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Empl. Art., § 8-1001(c)(1)*. There are two types of valid circumstances: a valid circumstance may be (1) a substantial cause that is job-related or (2) a factor that is non-job related but is “necessitous or compelling”. *Paynter* 202 Md. at 30. The “necessitous or compelling” requirement relating to a cause for

leaving work voluntarily does not apply to “good cause”. *Board of Educ. v. Paynter*, 303 Md. 22, 30 (1985). In a case where medical problems are at issue, mere compliance with the requirement of supplying a written statement or other documentary evidence of a health problem does not mandate an automatic award of benefits. *Shifflet v. Dept. of Emp. & Training*, 75 Md. App. 282 (1988).

Section 8-1001 of the Labor and Employment Article provides that individuals shall be disqualified from the receipt of benefits where their unemployment is due to leaving work voluntarily, without good cause arising from or connected with the conditions of employment or actions of the employer or without, valid circumstances. A circumstance for voluntarily leaving work is valid if it is a substantial cause that is directly attributable to, arising from, or connected with the conditions of employment or actions of the employing unit or of such necessitous or compelling nature that the individual had no reasonable alternative other than leaving the employment.

In the instant case, the Board finds the weight of the credible evidence supports a finding that the claimant relocated to Florida to live with family because she lost her housing in Maryland. The claimant made a good faith effort to find alternative housing arrangements in Maryland prior to quitting. The claimant, with due diligence, pursued the possibility of transferring to the employer’s Florida region. The claimant’s efforts were not successful. Having no other alternative, the claimant voluntarily quit her job for personal reasons effective April 26, 2013.

In the instant case the claimant quit for personal reasons which cannot be good cause within the meaning of § 8-1001(b) or valid circumstances within the meaning of § 8-1001(c)(1)(i) as a matter of law.

However, the Board finds that the weight of the credible evidence supports a finding that the claimant demonstrated necessitous and compelling reasons for quitting and that all reasonable alternatives were exhausted prior to quitting; therefore, a finding of valid circumstances within the meaning of § 8-1001(c)(1)(ii) is supported. The Board finds that only the minimum five-week penalty is measured and appropriate on the facts of this case.

The Board notes that the hearing examiner did not offer or admit the *Agency Fact Finding Report* into evidence. The Board did not consider this document when rendering its decision.

The Board finds based on a preponderance of the credible evidence that the claimant did not meet her burden of demonstrating that she quit for good cause within the meaning of § 8-1001.

However, the Board finds based on a preponderance of the credible evidence that the claimant met her burden of demonstrating that she quit for valid circumstances within the meaning of § 8-1001.

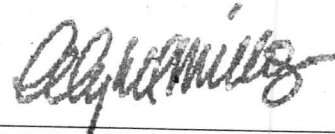
The hearing examiner’s decision shall be reversed for the reasons stated herein.

The employer should note that, provided that it has not elected to be a reimbursing employer pursuant to *Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Emp. Art. § 8-616*, any benefits paid to the claimant as a result of this decision shall not affect its earned (tax) rating record. *See Md. Code Ann., Lab. & Emp. Art., § 8-611(e)(1)*.

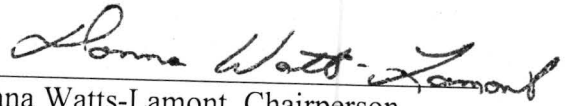
DECISION

It is held that the claimant left work voluntarily, without good cause but for valid circumstances, within the meaning of Maryland Code Annotated, Labor and Employment Article, Title 8, Section 1001. The claimant is disqualified from receiving benefits from the week beginning April 21, 2013 and the four weeks immediately following.

The Hearing Examiner's decision is reversed.



Clayton A. Mitchell, Sr., Associate Member



Donna Watts-Lamont, Chairperson

VD

Copies mailed to:

TINA WILLIAMS

UNITED HEALTHCARE SERVICES INC

JEFF SCHER

UHC MANAGEMENT COMPANY

Susan Bass, Office of the Assistant Secretary

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS DECISION

TINA WILLIAMS

SSN #

Claimant

vs.

UNITED HEALTHCARE SERVICES INC

Employer/Agency

Before the:

**Maryland Department of Labor,
Licensing and Regulation**

Division of Appeals

1100 North Eutaw Street

Room 511

Baltimore, MD 21201

(410) 767-2421

Appeal Number: 1321815

Appellant: Claimant

Local Office : 63 / CUMBERLAND
CLAIM CENTER

August 20, 2013

For the Claimant: PRESENT

For the Employer: PRESENT , JEFF SCHER, SCHAMOT SONWEEN

For the Agency:

ISSUE(S)

Whether the claimant's separation from this employment was for a disqualifying reason within the meaning of the MD. Code Annotated, Labor and Employment Article, Title 8, Sections 1001 (Voluntary Quit for good cause), 1002 - 1002.1 (Gross/Aggravated Misconduct connected with the work), or 1003 (Misconduct connected with the work).

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Claimant (Tina Williams) began working for this Employer (United Healthcare Services, Inc.) on May 29, 2013. At the time of separation, the Claimant was working as a Providers Services Representative. The Claimant last worked for the Employer on April 26, 2013, before quitting to relocate to the State of Florida.

On April 9, 2013, the Claimant submitted a letter of resignation to the Employer. The Claimant found that she would be losing her housing in Maryland and had no where to live. The Claimant initially requested the Employer to transfer to her job to Florida. The Employer was unable to accommodate the Claimant's request because she could not be relocated to an area within a sixty (60) mile radius of her intended new residence. Prior to quitting her job the Claimant did not ask for a leave of absence or other accommodation from the Employer. Although the Claimant was working a full-time job, the Claimant allegedly could find no other housing within the State of Maryland that she could afford in order to retain her employment.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Md. Code Ann., Labor & Emp. Article, Section 8-1001 provides that an individual is disqualified from receiving benefits when unemployment is due to leaving work voluntarily. The Court of Appeals interpreted Section 8-1001 in Allen v. CORE Target City Youth Program, 275 Md. 69, 338 A.2d 237 (1975): "As we see it, the phrase 'leaving work voluntarily' has a plain, definite and sensible meaning...; it expresses a clear legislative intent that to disqualify a claimant from benefits, the evidence must establish that the claimant, by his or her own choice, intentionally, of his or her own free will, terminated the employment." 275 Md. at 79.

Md. Code Ann., Labor & Emp. Article, Section 8-1001 provides that an individual shall be disqualified for benefits where unemployment is due to leaving work voluntarily without good cause arising from or connected with the conditions of employment or actions of the employer, or without valid circumstances. A circumstance is valid only if it is (i) a substantial cause that is directly attributable to, arising from, or connected with conditions of employment or actions of the employing unit; or (ii) of such necessitous or compelling nature that the individual has no reasonable alternative other than leaving the employment.

EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE

The Hearing Examiner considered all of the testimony and evidence of record in reaching this decision. Where the evidence was in conflict, the Hearing Examiner decided the Facts on the credible evidence as determined by the Hearing Examiner.

The claimant had the burden to show that by a preponderance of the evidence that she/he voluntarily quit his position for reasons that constitute either good cause or valid circumstances pursuant to the Maryland Unemployment Insurance Law. Hargrove v. City of Baltimore, 2033-BH-83. In this case, this burden has not been met.

The Claimant quit her job to relocate to the State of Florida because she had lost her housing in Maryland. The Claimant did not ask for a leave of absence or other accommodation from the Employer to retain her employment in Maryland prior to quitting her job. Therefore, the Claimant made no reasonable efforts to retain her employment. Consequently, the Claimant has failed to prove that the reason that she quit her job was caused by conditions of her employment or that her reasons were of such a necessitous and compelling nature that she had no reasonable alternative other than to sever her employment and relocate to Florida.

It is thus determined that the Claimant has concurrently failed to demonstrate that the reason for quitting rises to the level necessary to demonstrate good cause or valid circumstances within the meaning of the sections of law cited above.

DECISION

IT IS HELD, that the Claimant's unemployment was due to leaving work voluntarily without good cause or valid circumstances within the meaning of Md. Code Ann., Labor & Emp. Article, Section 8-1001. Benefits are denied for the week beginning April 21, 2013 and until the Claimant becomes reemployed and earns at least 15 times the Claimant's weekly benefit amount in covered wages and thereafter becomes unemployed through no fault of the Claimant.

The determination of the Claims Specialist is modified.

L. Williamson, Esq.

L. Williamson, Esq.
Hearing Examiner

Notice of Right to Request Waiver of Overpayment

The Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation may seek recovery of any overpayment received by the Claimant. Pursuant to Section 8-809 of the Labor and Employment Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, and Code of Maryland Regulations 09.32.07.01 through 09.32.07.09, the Claimant has a right to request a waiver of recovery of this overpayment. This request may be made by contacting Overpayment Recoveries Unit at 410-767-2404. If this request is made, the Claimant is entitled to a hearing on this issue.

A request for waiver of recovery of overpayment does not act as an appeal of this decision.

Esto es un documento legal importante que decide si usted recibirá los beneficios del seguro del desempleo. Si usted disiente de lo que fue decidido, usted tiene un tiempo limitado a apelar esta decisión. Si usted no entiende cómo apelar, usted puede contactar (301) 313-8000 para una explicación.

Notice of Right of Further Appeal

This is a final decision of the Lower Appeals Division. Any party who disagrees with this decision may request a further appeal either in person, by facsimile or by mail with the Board of Appeals. Under COMAR 09.32.06.01A(1) appeals may not be filed by e-mail. Your appeal must be filed by September 4, 2013. You may file your request for further appeal in person at or by mail to the following address:

Board of Appeals
1100 North Eutaw Street
Room 515
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Fax 410-767-2787
Phone 410-767-2781

NOTE: Appeals filed by mail are considered timely on the date of the U.S. Postal Service postmark.

Date of hearing : August 12,2013
TH/Specialist ID: WCU2P
Seq No: 001
Copies mailed on August 20, 2013 to:

TINA WILLIAMS
UNITED HEALTHCARE SERVICES INC
LOCAL OFFICE #63
JEFF SCHER
UHC MANAGEMENT COMPANY