

DECISION DIGEST

Actual cases and rulings from Princeton Claims Management

NJHA
HEALTHCARE
BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

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Claimant's Burden to Establish "Good Cause" for Leaving Work

Background

A hospital insurance specialist resigned from her job citing personal reasons related to her deteriorating health.

The employee explained in a written resignation letter that her blood pressure was spiking and her anxiety level was "off the charts" due to the stress at work. The employee was under the care of a doctor but did not provide documentation that her health problems were caused or aggravated because of work. She blamed her manager for treating her unfairly by placing her on a performance improvement plan. Although the plan was intended to help her succeed, the insurance specialist viewed it as retribution from the manager. She acknowledged mistakes in performing her job duties, but blamed her manager for increasing her workload and not providing more support. She complained to human resources about her dissatisfactions, and contended they did not investigate the situation, giving her no choice but to resign.

Process

The former employee (claimant) filed an unemployment claim and was held disqualified for leaving work without "good cause" attributable to the work under N.J.S.A. 43-5(a). The claimant filed an appeal contending she should be eligible because her health issues were work related which gave her good cause for quitting.

The claimant, the employer's witnesses and agent, Princeton Claims Management (PCM) appeared for the hearing. The claimant testified she resigned due to work related stress which had caused adverse health problems. She acknowledged that although she was under the care of the doctor, he did not advise her to leave the job. The claimant's manager testified that she wanted the claimant to succeed and did not treat her differently than any other employee. The manager was aware of the claimant's health complaints but never received a doctor's note substantiating that these issues were job-related or that special accommodations were needed. The employer's human resource witness testified that she initiated an investigation, but no action was taken because the claimant resigned prior to its completion.

Judgment

The examiner held that since the claimant left work for health reasons and did not provide a medical certificate required to support a finding of "good cause," her leaving of work is personal and disqualifying under N.J.S.A. 43:21-5(a).

This case illustrates that while an individual may have a compelling health or medical reason for leaving work, a doctor's note is required to substantiate that his/her condition has a work connected origin or is aggravated by the work to be eligible for benefits under NJ's UI Law.

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