

Voluntary Separation Guidelines

To collect unemployment benefits the employee (now claimant) must establish they had “good cause” to quit. A common misconception is that a voluntary quit automatically disqualifies claimants from unemployment benefits. While most quits, especially for non-compelling personal reasons, are disqualifying, there are significant exceptions. For example, all states may allow benefits for a quit with “good cause” attributable to employment. Other states consider broader circumstances to establish “good cause” that include quits for certain compelling personal reasons leaving the claimant with no reasonable alternative. **Careful reporting and documentation of voluntary quits is vital to effectively control unwarranted claims.**

Some examples of separations: Quit – Without “Good Cause”

- Job abandonment, no call, no show for three or more days
- Look for other work, i.e., career change
- Stay home with children
- Get married
- Attend school

To establish good cause in voluntary separations, the claimant must be able to show they attempted to retain their position prior to quitting by following company policy and procedures, and voicing complaints. Employers should be prepared to explain what actions the company took to resolve the issue.

Some examples of Separations: Quit – With “Good Cause”

- Evidence of harassment or discrimination
- Working conditions detrimental to health or safety
- Substantial or adverse change in terms of hire (i.e. reduction in hours, pay, change in duties or worksite)
- Health or physical limitations
- Care for a dependent parent or child
- Quit for medical reasons
- Personality conflicts

Since laws, rules and exceptions vary greatly, you should take care to obtain, if possible, a letter of resignation and/or conduct an exit interview documenting reasons for a quit. If an employee is leaving because of an alleged problem on the job, document the background and attempts to find a solution, i.e., offer of a transfer or leave of absence. **Note: A quit in lieu of discharge is not a voluntary quit since continuing work was not available.**