

2023 Kansas Statutes

44-709b. Exceptions to eligibility conditions and disqualification conditions in employment security law; retroactive payment of benefits; duties of secretary of labor; appeal of award or denial of benefits; repayment or benefit offset. (a) An individual aggrieved by a violation of K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 44-663, and amendments thereto, who has filed a claim for benefits under the employment security law and who is otherwise eligible for benefits under the employment security law shall not become ineligible for benefits pursuant to K.S.A. 44-705, and amendments thereto, or be disqualified from receiving benefits pursuant to K.S.A. 44-706, and amendments thereto, on the grounds that the claimant:

(1) Was discharged or suspended for misconduct if the employer's conduct in discharging or suspending such claimant was a violation of K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 44-663, and amendments thereto; or

(2) has declined to accept work that requires compliance with a COVID-19 vaccine requirement if the claimant has requested an exemption from the prospective employer in accordance with section 1, and amendments thereto, and such request was denied. In such case, such work for such claimant shall be deemed not to constitute suitable work for purposes of the employment security law.

(b) (1) Notwithstanding the time limitations of K.S.A. 44-709, and amendments thereto, the provisions of K.S.A. 44-706, and amendments thereto, or any other provision of the employment security law to the contrary, a claimant upon request shall be retroactively paid benefits for any week that the claimant would otherwise have been eligible for such benefits, if such claimant was disqualified from receiving such benefits during the period of September 9, 2021, through the effective date of this act on the grounds that the claimant was discharged or suspended for misconduct as the result of the claimant's refusal to comply with a COVID-19 vaccine requirement after the claimant requested an exemption or accommodation from such requirement provided by state or federal law and such request was denied.

(2) The secretary of labor shall independently review any claims denied during the period of September 9, 2021, through the effective date of this act to determine if the claimant was disqualified from receiving benefits on the grounds that the claimant was discharged or suspended for misconduct as the result of the claimant's refusal to comply with a COVID-19 vaccine requirement after the claimant requested an exemption or accommodation from such requirement provided by state or federal law and such request was denied. If the claimant has not requested retroactive payment of such benefits as provided by paragraph (1), the secretary shall retroactively pay benefits to such claimant for any week that the claimant would otherwise have been eligible for such benefits.

(3) The claimant or the employer may appeal an award or denial of benefits made pursuant to this section as provided in K.S.A. 44-709, and amendments thereto.

(4) The secretary of labor shall develop and implement procedures to enable claimants to retroactively substantiate and file claims under this subsection.

(c) Benefits awarded to a claimant who receives back pay pursuant to K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 44-663(c), and amendments thereto, shall be subject to the repayment or benefit offset and other provisions of K.S.A. 44-706(s) and 44-719(d), and amendments thereto, if applicable.

(d) As used in this section:

(1) "COVID-19 vaccine requirement" means the same as in K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 44-663, and amendments thereto; and

(2) all other terms mean the same as in the employment security law.

History: L. 2021, ch. 1, § 2 (Special Session); November 23.