

STATE OF WISCONSIN
BEFORE THE WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

DANA DOMBROWSKI, Appellant,

vs.

STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES, Respondent.

Case ID: 2.0203

Case Type: PA

DECISION NO. 41517

Appearances:

Dana Dombrowski, 3400 Yorkshire Ln., Apt. 221, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, appearing on her own behalf.

Nicole Porter, Attorney, Department of Administration, 101 East Wilson Street, 10th Floor, P.O. Box 7864, Madison, Wisconsin, appearing on behalf of the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

DECISION AND ORDER

On April 2, 2026, Dana Dombrowski filed an appeal with the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission asserting she had been suspended for one-day without just cause by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The matter was assigned to Commission Examiner Cara Larson.

A hearing was held via Zoom on May 29, 2026, by Examiner Larson. The parties made oral closing arguments at the end of the hearing. On February 5, 2026, pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 227.46(3)(a), Examiner Larson was granted final authority to issue the Commission's decision.

Being fully advised on the premises, and having considered the matter, the Commission makes and issues the following:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Dana Dombrowski (Dombrowski) is employed by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) as a Nurse Clinician 2 at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute and had permanent status in class at the time of her discipline.

2. The DHS is a state agency responsible for the operation of various Health Services institutions including Winnebago Mental Health Institute, located in Winnebago, Wisconsin.

3. Dombrowski failed to complete her timesheets by the required deadline on multiple occasions in 2025, including May 28, June 10, July 29, August 5, September 30, and November 11, 2025, in violation of DHS Policy 405 which requires employees to enter and submit timesheets weekly.

4. Following an investigation, the DHS issued Dombrowski a one-day suspension on November 26, 2025, for the misconduct referenced in Finding of Facts 3.

Based on the above and foregoing Findings of Fact, the Commission makes and issues the following:

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission has jurisdiction to review this appeal pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 230.44 (1)(c).

2. The State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services had just cause within the meaning of Wis. Stat. § 230.34(1)(a) to issue Dana Dombrowski a one-day suspension.

Based on the above and foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Commission makes and issues the following:

ORDER

The one-day suspension issued to Dana Dombrowski by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services is affirmed.

Issued at Madison, Wisconsin, this 17th day of July 2026.

WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

Electronically signed by: Cara J. Larson

Cara J. Larson, Hearing Examiner

MEMORANDUM ACCOMPANYING DECISION AND ORDER

Section 230.34(1)(a), Stats., provides in pertinent part the following as to certain employees of the State of Wisconsin:

An employee with permanent status in class ... may be removed, suspended without pay, discharged, reduced in base pay or demoted only for just cause.

Section 230.44(1)(c), Stats., provides that a State employee with permanent status in class:

may appeal a demotion, layoff, suspension, discharge or reduction in base pay to the commission . . . if the appeal alleges that the decision was not based on just cause.

Dana Dombrowski had permanent status in class at the time of her discipline, and her appeal alleges that the discipline was not based on just cause.

The State has the burden of proof to establish that Dombrowski was guilty of the alleged misconduct and that the misconduct constitutes just cause for the discipline imposed. *Reinke v. Personnel Bd.*, 53 Wis.2d 123 (1971); *Safransky v. Personnel Bd.*, 62 Wis.2d 464 (1974).

The material facts are not in dispute. Dombrowski acknowledges that she failed to complete her timesheets by the required deadline on multiple occasions in 2025, including May 28, June 10, July 29, August 5, September 30, and November 11, 2025.

DHS Policy 405 requires employees to enter and submit timesheets weekly. Dombrowski failed to do so six times between May and November 2025. She also disregarded multiple email notifications and reminders about the requirement. After her fourth violation, management issued a formal Letter of Expectation and again reminded her of the requirement. Even after that reminder, she failed to timely complete her timesheets on two additional occasions.

Dombrowski violated Work Rule 2 by failing to follow a written agency policy on timesheet reporting. She also violated Work Rule 3 by failing to follow written instructions and repeated directions about timely timesheet submission.

Dombrowski explained that during this period she cared for her seriously ill father, who later entered hospice and passed away. She testified that these circumstances affected her ability to focus on administrative tasks. Those circumstances are not in dispute and provide important context for her conduct. However, they do not change the Department's expectation that employees complete required timesheets on time. Dombrowski knew this responsibility, received repeated reminders and written guidance, and was specifically instructed on how to report her time. Even after receiving the Letter of Expectation, she continued to miss deadlines. Although she later corrected the issue and has had no further violations, the Department acted within its authority to address the repeated misconduct when it occurred.

The one-day suspension reflects progressive discipline and represents the first formal step in that process. While not required prior to imposing formal discipline, the Department first attempted to resolve Dombrowski's noncompliance through warning emails and then issued a Letter of Expectation. Only after those efforts and her continued non-compliance did the Department impose the one-day suspension. Accordingly, the Department had just cause to impose discipline, and the one-day suspension is affirmed.

Issued at Madison, Wisconsin, this 17th day of July 2026.

WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

Electronically signed by: Cara J. Larson

Cara J. Larson, Hearing Examiner