



THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

DESTITUTE PERSONS ACT 1989

2020 REVISED EDITION

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Destitute Persons Act 1989

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An Act to provide for the care and rehabilitation of destitute persons
and to provide for matters connected therewith.

[1 May 1989]

Short title

1. This Act is the Destitute Persons Act 1989.

Interpretation

2.—(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires —

“destitute person” means —

- (a) any person found begging in a public place in a way that causes or is likely to cause annoyance to persons frequenting the place or otherwise creates a nuisance;
or
- (b) any idle person found in a public place, whether or not he or she is begging, who has no visible means of subsistence or place of residence or is unable to give a satisfactory account of himself or herself;

“Director-General” means the Director-General of Social Welfare and includes any person who is authorised by him or her to perform any of the duties or exercise any of the powers of the Director-General under this Act or any of its rules;

“public place” includes any place to which the public is admitted without payment or on payment;

“superintendent” means a person having the management or control of any welfare home established under the provisions, and for the purposes, of this Act;

“welfare home” means any institution or part of the institution for the reception, care and rehabilitation of destitute persons established under the provisions, and for the purposes, of this Act.

[30/2019]

(2) For the purposes of this Act, a person is deemed to be begging if the person’s conduct is calculated to induce the giving of alms, whether or not there is any pretence of singing, playing, performing, offering anything for sale or otherwise.

Power to require destitute person to reside in welfare home

3.—(1) Any public officer acting under the direction of the Director-General or any police officer may take in the officer’s

charge any destitute person and deliver that person to the custody of the Director-General.

[30/2019]

(2) If the Director-General has reasonable cause to believe that any person so delivered into his or her custody has no visible means of subsistence, he or she may arrange for that person to be temporarily admitted into a welfare home until the Director-General has held an inquiry.

[30/2019]

(3) Every such inquiry must be completed within a period of 30 days from the date of that person's admission into a welfare home or such further period, not exceeding 30 days, as the Minister may approve.

(4) If after holding the inquiry the Director-General is satisfied that the person is a destitute person within the meaning of this Act, the Director-General may by warrant under his or her hand require that person to reside in a welfare home.

[30/2019]

Penalty for begging

4.—(1) Any person being a habitual beggar found begging in a public place in a way that causes or is likely to cause annoyance to persons frequenting the place or otherwise creates a nuisance shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years.

(2) In this section, "habitual beggar" means a person who on at least 2 previous occasions was found begging in a public place in a way that causes or is likely to cause annoyance to persons frequenting the place or otherwise creates a nuisance and, consequently, was required on those 2 occasions to reside in a welfare home.

Voluntary admission into welfare home

5. Any destitute person who voluntarily seeks admission into a welfare home is required to undertake that, if admitted, he or she will abide by the conditions of admission imposed under this Act or any rules made under this Act.