

**Destitute Persons Act
(CHAPTER 78)**

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DESTITUTE PERSONS ACT

(CHAPTER 78)

(Original Enactment: Act 8 of 1989)

REVISED EDITION 2013

(31st December 2013)

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

[1st May 1989]

Short title

- 1.** This Act may be cited as the Destitute Persons Act.

Interpretation

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

“destitute person” means —

- (a)** any person found begging in a public place in such a way as to cause or be likely to cause annoyance to persons frequenting the place or otherwise to create a nuisance; or

- (b) any idle person found in a public place, whether or not he is begging, who has no visible means of subsistence or place of residence or is unable to give a satisfactory account of himself;

“Director” means the Director of Social Welfare appointed under section 3(1) of the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 38) and includes any person who is authorised by him to perform any of the duties or exercise any of the powers of the Director under this Act or any rules made thereunder;

“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 of, and for the purposes of, this Act;

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

[20/2001]

(2) For the purposes of this Act, a person shall be deemed to be begging if his 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 or any police officer may take in his charge any destitute person and deliver him to the custody of the Director.

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

(3) Every such inquiry shall 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 such inquiry the Director is satisfied that that person is a destitute person within the meaning of this Act, he may by warrant under his hand require that person to reside in a welfare home.

Penalty for begging

4.—(1) Any person being a habitual beggar found begging in a public place in such a way as to cause or be likely to cause annoyance to persons frequenting the place or

otherwise to create 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 such a way as to cause or be likely to cause annoyance to persons frequenting the place or otherwise to create a nuisance and was in consequence thereof 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 shall be required to undertake that, if admitted, he will abide by the conditions of admission imposed under this Act or any rules made thereunder.

Taking of finger impressions and photographs

6.—(1) The Director may authorise the taking of finger impressions and photographs of any destitute person residing in a welfare home.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), after the expiry of 2 years from the date of discharge of a destitute person from a welfare home, the Director shall, on the application from that person, deliver to him the sheet upon which his finger impressions have been made together with the negatives and copies of the photographs taken of him, and if no such application is received after that period of 2 years and before the expiry of 3 years from the date of discharge, those records shall be destroyed.

(3) The Director may retain 3 copies of the photographs taken of the destitute person for maintaining a register of destitute persons admitted to and discharged from welfare homes.

Minister may establish welfare homes

7.—(1) The Minister may, by notification in the *Gazette*, establish welfare homes at such places within Singapore as he thinks proper for the reception, care and rehabilitation of destitute persons in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(2) The Minister may appoint superintendents and other officers for the management of such welfare homes.

(3) Every superintendent or officer shall be deemed to be a public servant within the meaning of the Penal Code (Cap. 224).

Board of Visitors

8.—(1) The Minister may, by notification in the *Gazette*, appoint a Board of Visitors