



**THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE**

**GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS  
ACT 1934**

**2020 REVISED EDITION**

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# Guardianship of Infants Act 1934

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An Act relating to the guardianship of infants.

[1 January 1935]

### Short title

1. This Act is the Guardianship of Infants Act 1934.

### **Interpretation**

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, “court” means the General Division of the High Court or a Family Court.

*[27/2014; 40/2019]*

### **Welfare of infant to be paramount consideration**

3. Where in any proceedings before any court the custody or upbringing of an infant or the administration of any property belonging to or held in trust for an infant or the application of the income thereof is in question, the court, in deciding that question, shall regard the welfare of the infant as the first and paramount consideration and, save insofar as such welfare otherwise requires, the father of an infant shall not be deemed to have any right superior to that of the mother in respect of such custody, administration or application nor shall the mother be deemed to have any claim superior to that of the father.

### **Equal right of mother to apply to court**

4. The mother of an infant shall have the like powers of applying to the court in respect of any matter affecting the infant as are possessed by the father.

### **Power of court to make, discharge or amend orders for custody and maintenance of infants**

5. The court may, upon the application of either parent or of any guardian appointed under this Act, make orders as it may think fit regarding the custody of such infant, the right of access thereto and the payment of any sum towards the maintenance of the infant and may alter, vary or discharge such order on the application of either parent or of any guardian appointed under this Act.

### **Enforcement of child access order**

**5A.**—(1) This section applies where —

- (a) the court makes an order under section 5 (called in this section the access order) giving a person (X) access to a child; and

- (b) the order is breached by the person (*Y*) who is required by the order to give *X* access to the child.
- (2) *X* may apply to the court to enforce the access order against *Y*.
- (3) Without limiting any other power of the court, the court may do all or any of the following in an application under subsection (2):
  - (a) order *Y* to give *X* additional access to the child to make up for the access denied to *X* as a result of the breach;
  - (b) order *Y* to compensate *X* for any reasonable expenses incurred by *X* as a result of the breach;
  - (c) order *X*, *Y* and the child (or any of them) to attend all or any of the following:
    - (i) counselling;
    - (ii) mediation;
    - (iii) a therapeutic or an educational programme specified by the court;
    - (iv) a family support programme as defined in section 139A of the Women’s Charter 1961;
  - (d) order *Y* to execute a bond, with or without sureties or security, as the court may determine, to secure *Y*’s future compliance with the access order;
  - (e) for every breach of the access order by *Y*, sentence *Y* to a fine not exceeding \$20,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both.
- (4) To avoid doubt, an order under subsection (3)(a) must not give *X* more access than what *X* is entitled to under the access order.
- (5) The court may, in making any order under subsection (3)(a), (b), (c) or (d) in respect of a breach of the access order —
  - (a) reserve the question whether *Y* should also be sentenced under subsection (3)(e) for that breach; and
  - (b) return to the question subsequently (without *X* having to make a fresh application).

(6) In respect of a breach of an access order, *X* may do either, but not both, of the following:

- (a) make an application under subsection (2);
- (b) bring proceedings to punish *Y* for contempt of court in respect of that breach.

*[Act 3 of 2022 wef 02/01/2025]*

(7) Unless the Family Justice Rules provide otherwise, an application to a Family Court under this section (called in this subsection the relevant application) —

- (a) must be made in the same manner as an application for a summons is made to a District Court or Magistrate’s Court under the Criminal Procedure Code 2010; and
- (b) is to be dealt with —
  - (i) as if the relevant application were a complaint for the purposes of that Code; but
  - (ii) in accordance with only such provisions of that Code, and with such provisions of any other written law, as may be prescribed by the Family Justice Rules.

*[Act 18 of 2023 wef 02/01/2025]*

(8) Despite section 47(1) of the Family Justice Act 2014, an access order made by the General Division of the High Court (whether before, on or after 1 October 2014) may be enforced by a Family Court in accordance with this section as if the access order had been made by the Family Court, except that a Family Court has no power to vary an order of the General Division of the High Court.

*[Act 18 of 2023 wef 02/01/2025]*

### **Rights of surviving parent as to guardianship**

**6.—**(1) On the death of the father of an infant, the mother, if surviving, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be guardian of the infant, either alone or jointly with any guardian appointed by the father. When no guardian has been appointed by the father or if the guardian or guardians appointed by the father is or are dead or refuses or refuse to act, the court may if it thinks fit appoint a guardian to act jointly with the mother.

(2) On the death of the mother of an infant, the father, if surviving, shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, be guardian of the infant, either alone or jointly with any guardian appointed by the mother. When no guardian has been appointed by the mother or if the guardian or guardians appointed by the mother is or are dead or refuses or refuse to act, the court may if it thinks fit appoint a guardian to act jointly with the father.

(3) Where an infant has no parent, no guardian of the person and no other person having parental rights with respect to him, the court, on the application of any person, may, if it thinks fit, appoint the applicant to be the guardian of the infant.

### **Power of father and mother to appoint testamentary guardians**

7.—(1) The father of an infant may by deed or will appoint any person to be guardian of the infant after his death.

(2) The mother of an infant may by deed or will appoint any person to be guardian of the infant after her death.

(3) Any guardian so appointed shall act jointly with the mother or father, as the case may be, of the infant so long as the mother or father remains alive, unless the mother or father objects to his so acting.

(4) If the mother or father so objects, or if the guardian so appointed as aforesaid considers that the mother or father is unfit to have the custody of the infant, the guardian may apply to the court, and the court may either refuse to make any order (in which case the mother or father shall remain sole guardian) or make an order that the guardian so appointed shall act jointly with the mother or father, or that he shall be sole guardian of the infant, and in the later case may make such order regarding the custody of the infant and the right of access thereto of the mother or father as, having regard to the welfare of the infant, the court may think fit, and may further order that the mother or father shall pay to the guardian towards the maintenance of the infant such weekly or other periodical sum as, having regard to the means of the mother or father, the court may consider reasonable.

(5) Where guardians are appointed by both parents, the guardians so appointed shall after the death of the surviving parent act jointly.

(6) If a guardian has been appointed by the court to act jointly with a surviving parent, he shall continue to act as guardian after the death of the surviving parent; but if the surviving parent has appointed a guardian, the guardian appointed by the court shall act jointly with the guardian appointed by the surviving parent.

### **Dispute between joint guardians**

8. Where 2 or more persons act as joint guardians of an infant and they are unable to agree on any question affecting the welfare of the infant, any of them may apply to the court for its direction, and the court may make such order regarding the matters in difference as it may think proper including power —

- (a) to make such orders regarding the custody of the infant and the right of access thereto of the mother or father as, having regard to the welfare of the infant, the court may think fit;
- (b) to order the mother or father to pay towards the maintenance or education of the infant such weekly or other periodical sum as, having regard to the means of the mother or father, the court may consider reasonable; and
- (c) to vary or discharge any order previously made under this section.

### **Enforcement of orders for payment of money**

9.—(1) When the court has made any order under this Act for payment of money, the court shall, in addition to any other powers for enforcing compliance with the order, have power, in any case where there is any pension or income payable to the person against whom the order was made and capable of being attached, after giving the person by whom the pension or income is payable an opportunity of being heard, to order that such part as the court may think fit of any such pension or income be attached and paid to the persons named by the court and such further order shall be an authority to the person by whom such pension or income is payable to make the payment so ordered, and the receipt of the person to whom the payment is ordered to be made shall be a good discharge to the person by whom the pension or income is payable.

(2) This section shall be binding on the Government.

### **Removal of guardian**

**10.** The court may remove from his guardianship any guardian, and may appoint another guardian in his place.

[27/2014]

### **Matters to be considered**

**11.** The court, in exercising the powers conferred by this Act, must have regard primarily to the welfare of the infant, and must consider —

- (a) where the infant has a parent or parents — the wishes of the parent or both of them, as the case may be; and
- (b) where the infant is of an age to express an independent opinion — the wishes of the infant.

[Act 18 of 2023 wef 31/01/2024]

### **Court to have regard to advice of welfare officers, etc.**

**11A.** When considering any question relating to the custody of any child, the court shall, whenever it is practicable, have regard to the advice of a person, whether or not a public officer, who is trained or experienced in child welfare but shall not be bound to follow such advice.

[2/2011]

### **Variation of trusts for maintenance of infant**

**12.** Where an infant is by an order of any court made under this Act removed from the care of any person and that person is entitled under any trust to receive any sum of money in respect of the maintenance of the infant, the court may order the whole or any part of the sum so payable under the trust to be paid to the person to whose care the infant is committed, to be applied by that person for the benefit of the infant in such manner as, having regard to the terms of the trust, the court may direct.



**Production of infant**

**13.** The court may, for the purpose of any application under this Act —

- (a) direct any person appearing to have the custody of an infant to produce the infant before the court or at such other place as the court may appoint; and
- (b) make such order for the temporary custody and protection of the infant as the court thinks fit.

[27/2014]

**Placing infant in custody of guardian**

**14.** Where an infant leaves, or is removed from, the custody of his lawful guardian, the court may order that he be returned to such custody, and for the purposes of enforcing such order, may direct the bailiff to seize the person of the infant and deliver him into the custody of his lawful guardian.

[27/2014]

**Security to be given**

**15.—(1)** Where a person appointed by the court is the guardian of an infant's property, he shall unless the court otherwise orders, give security in such sum as may be appointed for the due performance of his duties as such guardian.

[27/2014]

(2) Such security shall be given in the manner prescribed for the time being in the case of receivers appointed by the court; and the guardian so appointed shall pass his accounts at such periods as may be ordered, and shall pay any balance certified to be due from him into court in the manner prescribed in the case of receivers.

**Limitation of guardian's powers**

**16.—(1)** A guardian of the property of an infant shall not, without the permission of the court —

- (a) sell, mortgage, exchange, or otherwise part with the possession of any of the movable or immovable property of the infant; or

(b) lease any land belonging to the infant for a term exceeding one year.

[27/2014]

[Act 25 of 2021 wef 15/10/2024]

(2) Any disposal of an infant's property in contravention of this section may be declared void, and on such declaration the court may make such order as appears requisite for restoring to the infant's estate the property so disposed of.

[27/2014]

(3) The court shall not make any order under subsection (1) unless it is necessary or advisable in the interests of the infant.

[27/2014]

### **Guardian may not give discharge for capital property**

17. A guardian of the property of an infant shall not, unless in any case the court otherwise orders, be empowered to give a good discharge for any legacy or other capital moneys payable to or receivable by an infant.

[27/2014]

### **Guardian may support infant out of income**

18.—(1) A guardian of the property of an infant may make reasonable provision out of the income of such property for his maintenance and education, having regard to his station in life; but no sum exceeding \$100 per month may be so applied without the permission of the court.

[27/2014]

[Act 25 of 2021 wef 15/10/2024]

(2) Where the income of the infant's property in the hands of the guardian is insufficient for such purpose, or money is required for the infant's advancement, the court may order that provision for such purpose be made out of the capital of the infant's property, and for such purpose may authorise the sale or mortgage of any part of the infant's property, and give such directions in regard thereto as may be necessary in the interests of the infant.

[27/2014]

**Special order in case of small estate**

**19.**—(1) If it appears that, having regard to the station in life of an infant and to the value of his property and to all the circumstances of the case, it would be expedient that the capital property of the infant should be made available for his maintenance, education or advancement in such manner as to avoid the expense of applications to the court, the court may, instead of appointing a guardian of the property of the infant, order that all the property of the infant of whatsoever description shall be placed in the hands of a person to be appointed by the court, with full power to deal with and apply the same for the purpose aforesaid in his sole and uncontrolled discretion; and in such case the receipt of the person so appointed shall be a good discharge to any person making any payment or transfer of any property to him on behalf of the infant.

[27/2014]

(2) Any person so appointed may be ordered by the court to render an account of his dealings with the infant's estate.

[27/2014]

(3) The court may for any sufficient reason discharge any order, or revoke any appointment, made under subsection (1), and may appoint another person with the same power or such greater or less power as may appear advisable, or may appoint a guardian of the infant's property.

[27/2014]

**Application for opinion, etc.**

**20.** Any guardian may apply to the court for the court's opinion, advice or direction on any question respecting the management or administration of the infant's property.

[27/2014]

**Exception for money paid into a District Court**

**21.** Unless the court otherwise orders, nothing in this Act shall apply to any money paid into a District Court to the credit of an infant in any action or proceeding in a District Court or to any money in a District Court ordered to be transferred to the credit of an infant, but the same shall be dealt with according to the Rules of Court.

[16/93; 5/2014; 27/2014]

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY  
GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS  
ACT 1934

This Legislative History is a service provided by the Law Revision Commission on a best-efforts basis. It is not part of the Act.

**1. Ordinance 11 of 1934 — Guardianship of Infants Ordinance, 1934**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 45/1934
First Reading	:	12 February 1934
Second and Third Readings	:	16 April 1934
Commencement	:	1 January 1935

*Note: Previously in the Civil Procedure Code (Ordinance No. 102, 1926 Revised Edition).*

**2. 1936 Revised Edition — Guardianship of Infants Ordinance (Chapter 50)**

Operation	:	1 September 1936
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**3. Ordinance 58 of 1940 — Guardianship of Infants (Amendment) Ordinance, 1940**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 3363/1940
First Reading	:	14 October 1940
Second and Third Readings	:	6 November 1940
Commencement	:	1 July 1941

**4. 1955 Revised Edition — Guardianship of Infants Ordinance (Chapter 16)**

Operation	:	1 July 1956
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**5. Act 17 of 1965 — Guardianship of Infants (Amendment) Act, 1965**

Bill	:	47/1965
First Reading	:	13 December 1965
Second and Third Readings	:	29 December 1965
Commencement	:	6 January 1966

**6. 1966 Reprint — Guardianship of Infants Ordinance (Chapter 16)**

Reprint	:	16 February 1966
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**7. 1970 Revised Edition — Guardianship of Infants Act (Chapter 22)**

Operation : 1 March 1971

**8. 1985 Revised Edition — Guardianship of Infants Act (Chapter 122)**

Operation : 30 March 1987

**9. Act 16 of 1993 — Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Act 1993**  
(Amendments made by section 29(5) read with item (6) of the Schedule to the above Act)

Bill : 12/1993

First Reading : 26 February 1993

Second Reading : 12 April 1993

Notice of Amendments : 12 April 1993

Third Reading : 12 April 1993

Commencement : 1 July 1993 (section 29(5) read with item (6) of the Schedule)

**10. Act 2 of 2011 — Women’s Charter (Amendment) Act 2011**

(Amendments made by section 17 of the above Act)

Bill : 34/2010

First Reading : 22 November 2010

Second and Third Readings : 10 January 2011

Commencement : 1 June 2011 (section 17)

**11. Act 5 of 2014 — Subordinate Courts (Amendment) Act 2014**

(Amendments made by section 11(9) read with item 14 of the Schedule to the above Act)

Bill : 26/2013

First Reading : 11 November 2013

Second and Third Readings : 21 January 2014

Commencement : 7 March 2014 (section 11(9) read with item 14 of the Schedule)

**12. Act 27 of 2014 — Family Justice Act 2014**

(Amendments made by section 58 of the above Act)

Bill : 21/2014

First Reading : 8 July 2014

Second Reading : 4 August 2014

Notice of Amendments	:	4 August 2014
Third Reading	:	4 August 2014
Commencement	:	1 October 2014 (section 58)

**13. Act 40 of 2019 — Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Act 2019**  
(Amendments made by section 28(1) read with item 65 of the Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	32/2019
First Reading	:	7 October 2019
Second Reading	:	5 November 2019
Notice of Amendments	:	5 November 2019
Third Reading	:	5 November 2019
Commencement	:	2 January 2021 (section 28(1) read with item 65 of the Schedule)

**14. 2020 Revised Edition — Guardianship of Infants Act 1934**

Operation	:	31 December 2021
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**15. Act 25 of 2021 — Courts (Civil and Criminal Justice) Reform Act 2021**

Bill	:	18/2021
First Reading	:	26 July 2021
Second and Third Readings	:	14 September 2021
Commencement	:	15 October 2024

**16. Act 18 of 2023 — Family Justice Reform Act 2023**  
(Amendments made by the above Act)

Bill	:	15/2023
First Reading	:	20 April 2023
Second and Third Readings	:	8 May 2023
Commencement	:	31 January 2024 2 January 2025

**17. Act 3 of 2022 — Women’s Charter (Amendment) Act 2022**

Bill	:	43/2021
First Reading	:	1 November 2021
Second and Third Readings	:	10 January 2022

Commencement : 2 January 2025

### Abbreviations

(updated on 29 August 2022)

G.N.	Gazette Notification
G.N. Sp.	Gazette Notification (Special Supplement)
L.A.	Legislative Assembly
L.N.	Legal Notification (Federal/Malaysian)
M.	Malaya/Malaysia (including Federated Malay States, Malayan Union, Federation of Malaya and Federation of Malaysia)
Parl.	Parliament
S	Subsidiary Legislation
S.I.	Statutory Instrument (United Kingdom)
S (N.S.)	Subsidiary Legislation (New Series)
S.S.G.G.	Straits Settlements Government Gazette
S.S.G.G. (E)	Straits Settlements Government Gazette (Extraordinary)