

CHAPTER 252

SUPPORT OF THE POOR

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252.1 “Poor person” defined.

The words “*poor*” and “*poor person*” as used in [this chapter](#) shall be construed to mean those who have no property, exempt or otherwise, and are unable, because of physical or mental disabilities, to earn a living by labor; but [this section](#) shall not be construed to forbid aid to needy persons who have some means, when the board shall be of opinion that the same will be conducive to their welfare and the best interests of the public.

[C97, §2252; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5297; C39, §3828.073; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.1]

252.2 Parents and children liable.

The father, mother, and children of any poor person, who is unable to maintain the poor person’s self by labor, shall jointly or severally relieve or maintain such person in such manner as, upon application to the board of supervisors of the county where such person has a residence or may be, they may direct.

[C51, §787; R60, §1355; C73, §1330; C97, §2216; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5298; C39, §3828.074; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.2]

252.3 Putative father.

The word “*father*” in [this chapter](#) includes the putative father of an illegitimate child, and the question of parentage may be tried in any proceeding to recover for or compel the support of such a child, and like proceedings may be prosecuted against the mother independently of or jointly with the alleged father.

[C51, §788; R60, §1356; C73, §1332; C97, §2250; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5299; C39, §3828.075; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.3]

Obligation of parent, chapter 600B

252.4 Who deemed trustee.

The word “*trustees*” in [this chapter](#) shall be construed to include and mean any person or officer of any county or city charged with the oversight of the poor.

[C51, §789; R60, §1357; C73, §1333; C97, §2251; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5300; C39, §3828.076; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.4]

252.5 Remote relatives.

In the absence or inability of nearer relatives, the same liability shall extend to grandparents, if of ability without personal labor, and to the grandchildren who are of ability by personal labor or otherwise.

[C51, §787; R60, §1355; C73, §1331; C97, §2217; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5301; C39, §3828.077; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.5]

252.6 Enforcement of liability.

Upon the failure of such relatives to assist or maintain a poor person who has made application for assistance, the county board of supervisors, service area advisory board created under [section 217.43](#), or state division of child and family services of the department of human services may apply to the district court of the county where the poor person resides or may be found for an order to compel the assistance or maintenance.

[C51, §789; R60, §1357; C73, §1333; C97, §2218; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5302; C39, §3828.078; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.6]

[83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159; 92 Acts, ch 1212, §9; 93 Acts, ch 54, §9; 2001 Acts, 2nd Ex, ch 4, §7, 9](#)

252.7 Notice — hearing.

At least ten days' notice in writing of the application shall be given to the parties sought to be charged, service thereof to be made as of an original notice, in which proceedings the county shall be plaintiff and the parties served defendants. No order shall be made affecting a person not served, but, as to such, notice may be given at any stage of the proceedings. The court may proceed in a summary manner to hear all the allegations and proofs of the parties, and order any one or more of the relatives who shall be able, to relieve or maintain the poor person, charging them as far as practicable in the order above named, and for that purpose may bring in new parties when necessary.

[C51, §790 – 792; R60, §1358 – 1360; C73, §1334 – 1336; C97, §2219; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5303; C39, §3828.079; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.7]

Service of notice, R.C.P. 1.302 – 1.315

252.8 Scope of order.

The order may be for the entire or partial support of the applicant, may be for the payment of money or the taking of the applicant to a relative's house, or may assign the applicant for a certain time to one and for another period to another, as is just and right, taking into view the means of the several relatives liable, but no such assignment shall be made to one who is willing to pay the amount necessary for support. If the order is for assistance in any other form than money, it shall state the extent and value of the assistance per week, and the time assistance shall continue; or the order may make the time of continuance indefinite, and it may be varied from time to time by a new order, as circumstances require, upon application to the court by the trustees, the poor person, or the relative affected, ten days' notice being given to the party or parties concerned.

[C51, §793 – 795; R60, §1361 – 1363; C73, §1337 – 1339; C97, §2219; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5304; C39, §3828.080; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.8]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §10](#)

252.9 Judgment — appeal.

When money is ordered to be paid, it shall be paid to such person as the court may direct. If support be not rendered as ordered, the court upon such fact being shown by the affidavit of one or more of the proper trustees, may render judgment and order execution for the amount due, rating any support ordered in kind at the valuation previously made. An appeal may be taken from the judgment rendered to the supreme court. Support for later periods under the same order may be, as it becomes due, applied for and obtained in the same manner.

[C51, §796 – 798; R60, §1364 – 1366; C73, §1340 – 1342; C97, §2219; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5305; C39, §3828.081; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.9]

252.10 through 252.12 Repealed by 76 Acts, ch 1104, §17.

252.13 Recovery by county.

1. Any county having expended money for the assistance or support of a poor person under [this chapter](#), may recover the money from any of the following:

- a. From the poor person if the person becomes able, or from the person's estate.
- b. From relatives by action brought within two years from the payment of the assistance or support.
- c. From the poor person by action brought within two years after the person becomes able.
- d. From the person's estate by filing the claim as provided by law.

2. There shall be allowed against the person's estate a claim of the sixth class for that portion of the liability to the county which exceeds the total amount of all claims of the first through the fifth classes, inclusive, as defined in [section 633.425](#), which are allowed against that estate.

[C51, §806; R60, §1374; C73, §1350; C97, §2222; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5309; C39, **§3828.085**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.13]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §11](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1026, §54](#)

Claims against estate, §633.410 et seq.
Section amended

252.14 Homestead — when liable.

When expenditures have been made for and on behalf of a poor person and the person's family, as contemplated by [section 252.13](#), the homestead of such poor person is liable for such expenditures when such poor person dies without leaving a surviving spouse, or child, as defined in [section 234.1](#).

[C31, 35, §5309-c1; C39, **§3828.086**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.14]

See also §561.21

252.15 Recovery by relative.

A more distant relation, who may have been compelled to aid a poor person, may recover from any one or more of the nearer relatives, and one so compelled to aid may recover contribution from others in the same degree, and a recovery may be had against the poor person or the person's estate, if, after such aid or support has been given, the person aided or supported becomes able to repay the same; but proceedings to recover therefor must be brought within two years from the time a cause of action accrues.

[C51, §807; R60, §1375; C73, §1351; C97, §2223; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5310; C39, **§3828.087**; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.15]

252.16 Settlement — how acquired.

A legal settlement in this state may be acquired as follows:

1. A person continuously residing in a county in this state for a period of one year acquires a settlement in that county except as provided in [subsection 7 or 8](#).

2. A person having acquired a settlement in a county of this state shall not acquire a settlement in any other county until the person has continuously resided in the other county for a period of one year except as provided in [subsection 7](#).

3. A person who is an inpatient, a resident, or an inmate of or is supported by an institution whether organized for pecuniary profit or not or an institution supported by charitable or public funds in a county in this state does not acquire a settlement in the county unless the person before becoming an inpatient, a resident, or an inmate in the institution or being supported by an institution has a settlement in the county. A minor child residing in an institution assumes the settlement of the child's custodial parent. Settlement of the minor child changes with the settlement of the child's custodial parent, except that the child retains the settlement that the child's custodial parent has on the child's eighteenth birthday until the child is discharged from the institution, at which time the child acquires the child's own settlement by continuously residing in a county for one year.

4. a. Minor children who reside with both parents take the settlement of the parents. If

the minor child resides on a permanent basis with only one parent or a guardian, the minor child takes the settlement of the parent or guardian with whom the child resides.

b. An emancipated minor acquires a legal settlement in the minor's own right. An emancipated minor is one who is absent from the minor's parents with the consent of the parents, is self-supporting, and has assumed a new relationship inconsistent with being a part of the family of the parents.

c. A minor, placed in the care of a public agency or facility as custodian or guardian, takes the legal settlement that the parents had upon severance of the parental relationship, and retains that legal settlement until a natural person is appointed custodian or guardian at which time the minor takes the legal settlement of the natural person or until the minor person attains the age of eighteen and acquires another legal settlement in the person's own right.

5. A person with settlement in this state who becomes a member on active duty of an armed service of the United States retains the settlement during the period of active duty. A person without settlement in this state who is a member on active duty of an armed service of the United States within the borders of this state does not acquire settlement during the period of active duty.

6. a. [Subsections 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8](#) do not apply to a blind person who is receiving assistance under the laws of this state.

b. A blind person who has resided in one county of this state for a period of six months acquires legal settlement for support as provided in [this chapter](#), except as specified in paragraph "c".

c. A blind person who is an inpatient or resident of, is supported by, or is receiving treatment or support services from a state resource center created under [chapter 222](#), a state mental health institute created under [chapter 226](#), the Iowa braille and sight saving school administered by the state board of regents, or any community-based provider of treatment or services for an intellectual disability, developmental disabilities, mental health, or substance abuse, does not acquire legal settlement in the county in which the institution, facility, or provider is located, unless the blind person has resided in the county in which the institution, facility, or provider is located for a period of six months prior to the date of commencement of receipt of assistance under the laws of this state or for a period of six months subsequent to the date of termination of assistance under the laws of this state.

7. A person hospitalized in or receiving treatment at a state mental health institute or state resource center does not acquire legal settlement in the county in which the institute or resource center is located unless the person is discharged from the institute or resource center, continuously resides in the county for a period of one year subsequent to the discharge, and during that year is not hospitalized in and does not receive treatment at the institute or resource center.

8. A person receiving treatment or support services from any provider, whether organized for pecuniary profit or not or whether supported by charitable or public or private funds, that provides treatment or services for intellectual disability, developmental disabilities, mental health, brain injury, or substance abuse does not acquire legal settlement in a county unless the person continuously resides in that county for one year from the date of the last treatment or support service received by the person.

[C51, §808; R60, §1376; C73, §1352; C97, §2224; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5311; C39, §3828.088; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.16]

[84 Acts, ch 1165, §1](#); [87 Acts, ch 50, §1, 2](#); [94 Acts, ch 1186, §34](#); [95 Acts, ch 119, §2](#); [97 Acts, ch 75, §1](#); [97 Acts, ch 169, §27](#); [98 Acts, ch 1181, §8](#); [2000 Acts, ch 1112, §51](#); [2009 Acts, ch 41, §263](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1019, §109, 110](#)

Applicability of 1995 amendments to subsection 6; redetermination of legal settlement for certain blind persons; exception to §252.17; 95 Acts, ch 119, §4 - 6

252.17 Settlement continues.

A legal settlement once acquired shall so remain until such person has removed from this state for more than one year or has acquired a legal settlement in some other county or state.

[C51, §809; R60, §1377; C73, §1353; C97, §2224; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5312; C39, §3828.089; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.17]

Exception for blind persons who acquired legal settlement in this state on or after July 1, 1994, and prior to May 1, 1995; see 95 Acts, ch 119, §4 – 6

252.18 Foreign paupers.

1. A person who is a county charge or is likely to become so, coming from another state and not having acquired a settlement in a county of this state or any such person having acquired a settlement in a county of this state who moves to another county, may be removed from this state or from the county into which the person has moved at the expense of the county where the person is found, upon the petition of the county to the district court in that county.

2. The court or judge shall fix the time and place of hearing on said petition and prescribe the time and manner of service of the notice of such hearing.

3. If upon the hearing on said petition such person shall be ordered to remove from the state or county and fails to do so, the person shall be deemed and declared in contempt of court and may be punished accordingly; or the judge may order the sheriff of the county seeking the removal to return such person to the state or county of the person's legal settlement.

[C51, §811; R60, §1379; C73, §1354; C97, §2225; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5313; C39, §3828.090; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.18]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10062, 10201](#)

Contempts, chapter 665

252.19 Repealed by 76 Acts, ch 1245(4), §25.

252.20 and 252.21 Reserved.

252.22 Contest between counties — chapter applicable to county public hospitals.

When assistance is granted to a poor person having a settlement in another county, the auditor shall at once by mail notify the auditor of the county of settlement of that fact, and, within fifteen days after receipt of the notice, the auditor shall inform the auditor of the county granting assistance if the claim of settlement is disputed. If it is not, the poor person, at the request of the auditor or board of supervisors of the county of settlement, may be maintained where the person then is at the expense of the county of legal settlement, and without affecting legal settlement as provided in [section 252.16](#).

All laws relating to the support of the poor as provided by [this chapter](#) shall be applicable to care, treatment, and hospitalization provided by county public hospitals.

For the purposes of [this section](#), “auditor” means the county auditor or the auditor’s designee.

[C51, §814, 816, 817; R60, §1382, 1384, 1385; C73, §1357, 1359, 1360; C97, §2228; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5317; C39, §3828.094; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.22]

[84 Acts, ch 1165, §2; 92 Acts, ch 1212, §12; 97 Acts, ch 169, §17](#)

252.23 Legal settlement disputes.

If the alleged settlement is disputed, then, within thirty days after notice as provided in [section 252.22](#), a copy of the notices sent and received shall be filed in the office of the clerk of the district court of the county against which claim is made, and a cause docketed without other pleadings, and tried as an ordinary action, in which the county granting the assistance shall be plaintiff, and the other defendant, and the burden of proof shall be upon the county granting the assistance. However, a dispute concerning the liability of a person’s county of residence for assistance provided through the county’s mental health and disability services

system implemented under [chapter 331](#) in connection with services initiated under [chapter 222](#), [230](#), or [249A](#) shall be resolved as provided in [section 331.394](#).

[C51, §816, 817; R60, §1384, 1385; C73, §1359, 1360; C97, §2228; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5318; C39, §3828.095; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.23]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §13](#); [2004 Acts, ch 1090, §53](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1120, §124, 130](#)

252.24 County of settlement liable — exception.

1. The county where the settlement is shall be liable to the county granting assistance for all reasonable charges and expenses incurred in the assistance and care of a poor person.

2. When assistance is furnished by any governmental agency of the county, township, or city, the assistance shall be deemed to have been furnished by the county in which the agency is located and the agency furnishing the assistance shall certify the correctness of the costs of the assistance to the board of supervisors of that county and that county shall collect from the county of the person's settlement. The amounts collected by the county where the agency is located shall be paid to the agency furnishing the assistance. This statute applies to services and supplies furnished as provided in [section 139A.18](#).

3. Notwithstanding [subsection 2](#), if assistance or maintenance is provided by a county through the county's mental health and disability services system implemented under [chapter 331](#), liability for the assistance and maintenance is the responsibility of the person's county of residence.

[C51, §815; R60, §1383; C73, §1358; C97, §2229; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5319; C39, §3828.096; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.24]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §14](#); [2000 Acts, ch 1066, §44](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1120, §125, 130](#)

252.25 County general assistance.

The board of supervisors of each county shall provide for the assistance of poor persons lawfully in the county who are ineligible for, or are in immediate need and are awaiting approval and receipt of, assistance under programs provided by state or federal law, or whose actual needs cannot be fully met by the assistance furnished under those programs. The county board of supervisors shall establish general rules as the board's members deem necessary to properly discharge their responsibility under [this section](#).

All applications, investigation reports, and case records of persons applying for county general assistance under [this chapter](#) are privileged communications and confidential, subject to use and inspection only by persons authorized by law in connection with their official duties relating to financial audits and administration of [this chapter](#) or as authorized by order of a district court. Examination of an individual's applications, reports, and records may also be authorized by a signed release from the individual.

[C73, §1361; C97, §2230; S13, §2230; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5320; C39, §3828.097; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.25]

[90 Acts, ch 1017, §2](#); [92 Acts, ch 1212, §15](#); [96 Acts, ch 1140, §1](#)

252.26 General assistance director.

The board of supervisors in each county shall appoint or designate a general assistance director for the county, who shall have the powers and duties conferred by [this chapter](#). In counties of one hundred thousand or less population, the county board may designate as general assistance director an employee of the state department of human services who is assigned to work in that county and is directed by the director of human services, pursuant to an agreement with the county board, to exercise the functions and duties of general assistance director in that county. The director shall receive as compensation an amount to be determined by the county board.

[C51, §819; R60, §1387; C73, §1361, 1364; C97, S13, §2230, 2233; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5321, 5327; C39, §3828.098, 3828.104; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, §252.26, 252.32; C81, §252.26]

[83 Acts, ch 96, §157, 159](#); [83 Acts, ch 123, §102, 209](#); [92 Acts, ch 1212, §16](#)

252.27 Form of assistance — condition.

1. The board of supervisors shall determine the form of the assistance. However, legal aid shall be only in civil matters and provided only through a legal aid program approved by the board of supervisors. The amount of assistance issued shall be determined by standards of assistance established by the board of supervisors. They may require any able-bodied person to work on public programs or projects at the prevailing local rate per hour in payment for and as a condition of granting assistance. The labor shall be performed under the direction of the officers having charge of the public programs or projects. Subject to [section 142.1](#), assistance may consist of the burial of nonresident indigent transients and the payment of the reasonable cost of burial, not to exceed two hundred fifty dollars.

2. The board shall record its proceedings relating to the provision of assistance to specific persons under [this chapter](#). A person who is aggrieved by a decision of the board may appeal the decision as if it were a contested case before an agency and as if the person had exhausted administrative remedies in accordance with the procedures and standards in [section 17A.19](#), [subsections 2 through 12](#), except [section 17A.19, subsection 10](#), paragraphs “b” and “g”, and [section 17A.20](#).

[C73, §1361; C97, §2230; S13, §2230; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5322; C39, §3828.099; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, S81, §252.27; [81 Acts, ch 117, §1039](#)]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §17](#); [98 Acts, ch 1202, §38, 46](#); [2013 Acts, ch 30, §54](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1092, §54](#)

Unnumbered paragraphs 1 and 2 editorially designated as subsections 1 and 2
Subsection 2 amended

252.28 through 252.32 Reserved.

252.33 Application for assistance.

A person may make application for assistance to a member of the board of supervisors, or to the general assistance director of the county where the person is. If application is made to the general assistance director and that officer is satisfied that the applicant is in a state of want which requires assistance at the public expense, the director may afford temporary assistance, subject to the approval of the board of supervisors, as the necessities of the person require and shall immediately report the case to the board of supervisors, who may continue or deny assistance, as they find cause.

[C51, §820; R60, §1388; C73, §1365; C97, §2234; S13, §2234; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5328; C39, §3828.105; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.33]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §18](#)

252.34 Reserved.

252.35 Payment of claims.

All claims and bills for the care and support of the poor shall be certified to be correct by the general assistance director and presented to the board of supervisors, and, if the board is satisfied that the claims and bills are reasonable and proper, they shall be paid.

[C51, §821; R60, §1389; C73, §1366; C97, §2235; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5330; C39, §3828.107; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.35]

[83 Acts, ch 123, §103, 209](#); [92 Acts, ch 1212, §19](#)

252.36 Reserved.

252.37 Appeal to supervisors.

If a poor person, on application to the general assistance director, is refused the required assistance, the applicant may appeal to the board of supervisors, who, upon examination into the matter, may order the director to provide assistance, or who may direct specific assistance.

[C51, §823; R60, §1391; C73, §1368; C97, §2237; C24, 27, 31, 35, §5333; C39, §3828.109; C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.37]

[92 Acts, ch 1212, §20](#); [2014 Acts, ch 1092, §55](#)

Section amended

252.38 through 252.41 Reserved.

252.42 Cooperation on work-assistance projects.

The county board of supervisors may join and cooperate with the United States government, or a city within the city's boundaries, or both the United States government and a city within the city's boundaries, in sponsoring work projects, provided that the money used does not exceed the cost per month of supplying assistance to the certified persons working on projects who would be receiving direct assistance if they were not employed on the projects.

[C46, 50, 54, 58, 62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §252.42]

[83 Acts, ch 123, §104, 209](#); [92 Acts, ch 1212, §21](#)

252.43 Repealed by 93 Acts, ch 172, §49.

252.44 Repealed by 76 Acts, ch 1056, §45.

252.45 Repealed by 81 Acts, ch 117, §1097.