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Singapore Massage Establishment Licence Application Guide

As the number of tourists visiting Singapore rises, the spa and massage industry has become one of the most sought by foreign investors. The spa and massage industry is an integral part of Singapore's health and wellness sector and has shown unprecedented growth in the past few years. It is also one of the only few industries that has been able to successfully remain resilient despite the economic crisis.

Prior to starting a spa and massage centre in Singapore, you must incorporate and register the business with Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority of Singapore ("ACRA") and apply for a Massage Establishment Licence with Police Licensing & Regulatory Department ("PLRD").

1. Massage Establishment Licence ("ME")

A ME licence is required if you intend to carry on the business of providing massage services in an establishment. Under Section 2(1) of the ME Act, "massage" is defined as "the act of rubbing, kneading or manipulating the human body or any part of it, by any person (whether or not using any hand-held equipment), for the purpose of relaxing muscle tension, stimulating circulation, increasing suppleness or otherwise".

A ME licence is not required if you are providing any of the following without any massage service of treatment:-

- (1) Manicure
- (2) Pedicure
- (3) Light treatment
- (4) Electric treatment
- (5) Vapour treatment
- (6) Baths

However, there are certain establishments that can be exempted from obtaining the licence, which subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Premises at which massage is provided in full public view (i.e. no rooms, curtains or any form of separation device are in use which block or otherwise make services “private”);
- (2) Premises at which massage is only to head or scalp;
- (3) Premises at which massage is only for customers below 12 years of age;
- (4) Premises at which massage is administrated by the following registered persons:-
 - (a) an individual who is registered under section 14 of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act (Cap. 333A) and has in force a practising certificate issued under section 17 of that Act;
 - (b) an individual who has a certificate of registration as an allied health professional under section 22 of the Allied Health Professions Act (Cap. 6B), and has in force a practising certificate issued under section 23 of that Act; or
 - (c) an individual who is a registered medical practitioner under the Medical Registration Act (Cap. 174) and has in force a practising certificate issued under section 36 of that Act.

2. Types of ME Licences

Under the Singapore ME Act, there are two (2) types of licences you can apply for:

(1) Category 1 Licence

Establishments with this type of licence must fulfil the following requirements:-

- (a) Allow to operate in Housing and Development Board (“HDB”) shop houses, shopping centres and hotels;
- (b) Allow to operate from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.;
- (c) Accreditation by and Letter of Acceptance from CaseTrust (Consumers Association of Singapore) are required;
- (d) The minimum floor area of the establishment must not less than 100 square meters; and
- (e) Other common requirements as specified in Section 3 below.

(2) Category 2 Licence

Establishments with this type of licence must fulfil the following requirements:-

- (a) Must be located far away from residential areas, schools and places of worship;
- (b) Allow to operate from 10 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.;
- (c) Will only be able to employ Singapore citizens, permanent residents and Malaysians with valid work passes only;
- (d) The minimum floor area of the establishment must not less than 50 square meters; and
- (e) Other common requirements as specified in Section 3 below.

3. Pre-Requisites for ME Licence

Before submitting the application form for a ME licence in Singapore, you must be aware of the following common requirements:

(1) Applicant

The applicant who wishes to apply for the ME licence to start a spa and massage business in Singapore must meet the following criteria:

- (a) Be at least 21-years of age at the time of application;
- (b) Must be a fit and proper person to hold the licence e.g. free from criminal records;
- (c) Be a responsible officer as defined in Section 2(1) of ME Act (i.e. an owner of the sole proprietor, a partner of the partnership or officers of the company); and
- (d) Hold a valid and relevant work pass if he / she is a foreigner.

(2) Business

The business applying for a ME licence to operate a spa and massage centre in Singapore is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) At least 80% of the masseuses/therapists have the required certification recognised by the PLRD throughout the period of the licence;
- (b) The remaining of the 20% of trainee masseuses/therapists must obtain the certification recognised by PLRD within six (6) months, to be calculated cumulatively, from the date of first registration;
- (c) All employees are required to wear the approved uniforms whilst working within the licensing establishment;

- (d) There must be no locking device for the doors of the massage or treatment rooms;
- (e) All rooms shall be numbered;
- (f) Rooms used by employees for administrative matters should have proper signages with a 'No Entry' sign to prevent unauthorised entry by customers;
- (g) Rooms for massage must be clear of any permanent or temporary objects or structures, so that there is a clear view of the room when the door is opened;
- (h) There must be no warning device installed in the licensed establishment that could be used to alert the employees of the arrival of enforcement officers;
- (i) The licensee shall ensure that there are no indecent advertisements of the licensed establishment;
- (j) The lighting in the massage rooms is to be sufficiently bright for the licensee and/or supervisors to be able to observe the action of the masseuse; and
- (k) The licensee or the supervisors shall conduct daily briefings to all employees that no sexual services are allowed within the licensed establishment.

(3) Employee

Approval must be obtained from PLRD before any individual may be employed to work in the ME.

At least 80% of the employees who are working in the ME must have at least one (1) of the following accreditations:

- (a) Comite International D'esthetique Et de Cosmetologie ("CIDESCO") International Beauty Diploma;
- (b) Confederation of International Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology ("CIBTAC") Diploma in Beauty Therapy Services;
- (c) CIBTAC Award in Body Massage or Diploma in Body Massage;
- (d) CIBTAC Diploma in Spa Therapy;
- (e) International Therapy Examination Council ("ITEC") Beauty Specialist Diploma;
- (f) ITEC Holistic Massage Diploma;
- (g) National Skills Recognition System ("NSRS") Skills Standards Package 1;
- (h) NSRS Skills Standards Package 2;
- (i) National Institute of Technical Education Certificate ("NITEC") in Spa and Aesthetic Therapy;
- (j) NITEC in Beauty Therapy (Body Massage / Hydrotherapy Treatment / Bodywrap Treatment);
- (k) Higher NITEC in Beauty & Spa Management; or
- (l) Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications ("WSQ") for the Spa Sector (which includes MEs) under the Tourism WSQ Framework.

4. Documents Required for ME Licence

The applicants should submit the application form along with the following supporting documents to the PLRD:

- (1) ACRA Business Profile;
- (2) Case Trust Accreditation Certification or Letter of Acceptance;
- (3) Coloured photographs showing the following:
 - (a) full front view of staff uniform (with sleeves for top and pants for bottom);
 - (b) side view of the staff uniform (with sleeves for top and pants for bottom);
 - (c) rear view of the staff uniform (with sleeves for top and pants for bottom);
 - (d) company or establishment name or company nametag on staff uniform; and
 - (e) a close-up shot of the company nametag (if nametag is used).
- (4) Layout plan of the establishment drawn to scale, stating the total floor area in Square Metres
- (5) Urban Redevelopment Authority (“URA”) planning permission for proposed use of premises to be used as ME or HDB approval letter (whichever is applicable);
- (6) A list with the details of the employees (including their names, designations, Singapore Identity Card number or passport details, contact details and certificates attained);
- (7) A list of the renovation / asset with receipts and invoices; and
- (8) A copy of training certificates of the therapists and professionals which duly recognized by the PLRD.

5. Processing Time for ME Licence

The processing time for the licence application is about 21 working days from the receipt of the application and the necessary supporting documents, if required.

The duration of the licence granted can up to 3 years. The licence can be renewed after that time period.

Kaizen Singapore office is able to provide clients with ME licence application and consultancy services, please consult our professional consultant.

If you need assistance or wish to obtain more information, please visit our official website at www.kaizencpa.com or contact us through the following methods:

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