

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Allen County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Lima and across Allen County. Learn which court handles your case, what to file, what it costs, and when to get help.

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- 01 See how Allen County splits family law across its courts.

 - 02 Know the difference between dissolution, divorce, juvenile custody, and probate adoption.

 - 03 Find the right form, the deposit, and the local rules that trip people up.

 - 04 Pick a next step that fits your budget, your timeline, and how much conflict there is.

START HERE

Use this guide like a map, not a rulebook.

Family law gets easier once you name a few things: the court, the path, the paperwork, and your next step. This guide is built on those questions for Allen County.

01

Which court handles this?

Married couples file divorce or dissolution in the Domestic Relations Division. Unmarried parents file custody in the Juvenile Court. Adoptions go to the Probate Court. One judge leads both Juvenile and Probate.

02

Do we agree, or is there a fight?

Agreement changes everything. Dissolution and uncontested filings run on signed paperwork. If someone disagrees, misses deadlines, or safety is a worry, plan for a more protective path.

03

What should I gather first?

Gather any current orders and your income records. Add insurance details, the kids' birth certificates, school and parenting-time notes, and a short list of what you want the court to decide.

THIS GUIDE IS INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

It explains how things usually work in Allen County. It cannot cover the facts of your case. Reading it, downloading it, or contacting Gavvl Law does not make you a client. Only a signed engagement agreement does that. For advice about your own case, talk with a licensed Ohio attorney.

A REQUIRED PARENTING CLASS

In a divorce or dissolution with minor children, both parents must take the county's parenting program, Assisting Our Kids, before the final hearing. It is a short online class.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Four parts: Domestic Relations (divorce and dissolution), Juvenile (unmarried parents), Probate (adoption), and how Gavvl can help. The full contents are on the next page.

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QUESTION ONE

Which court is actually handling your case?

One family can touch more than one court. In Allen County, divorce sits in one building and the juvenile and probate work in another. Start with the relationship, and with what you need a judge to decide.

MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED

Domestic Relations Division

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, spousal support, and dividing property and debt.

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Matt C. Staley. (419) 223-8511.

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Court

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and child support for unmarried parents. Also abuse, neglect, and dependency.

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Todd E. Kohlrieser.

ADOPTION

Probate Court

Stepparent, kinship, and adult adoption, plus name changes and guardianships.

WHERE

1000 Wardhill Ave. Judge Kohlrieser.

Two buildings, three courts

Divorce and dissolution are heard in the Domestic Relations Division, which files through the Clerk of Courts at 301 N. Main Street. Unmarried-parent custody and adoption both run through the combined Juvenile and Probate Court at 1000 Wardhill Avenue, under Judge Kohlrieser. File with the right one for your case.

PART ONE

The Domestic Relations Division ends marriages.

If you are married, ending the marriage runs through the Domestic Relations Division. The first real question is simple: can both spouses sign a full agreement?

DIVORCE OR DISSOLUTION	TEMP ORDERS MOTION	WHERE YOU FILE	RESIDENCY
\$375	+\$25	Clerk of Courts	6 months in Ohio

QUICK PATHFINDER

Do you agree on everything?

If yes, dissolution may fit. If no, divorce is the safer or required path. Agreement means more than wanting the case over. It means signed terms on property, debt, support, and parenting. The base deposit is the same either way.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses file together as co-petitioners. They ask the court to approve a signed Separation Agreement. The court holds a hearing 30 to 90 days later. Both spouses must appear and confirm the agreement.

Divorce is a lawsuit.

One spouse files against the other. Use it when you do not yet agree. Use it when you cannot find your spouse, or when you need the court to decide something.

THE DEPOSIT, AND A COUPLE OF ADD-ONS

A divorce or dissolution costs \$375 to file, with or without children. A temporary-orders motion adds \$25, and if the court orders a custody or home study, a \$450 deposit applies. One spouse must have lived in Ohio six months.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution packet, step by step.

Dissolution uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms plus a few local ones. Sign the Separation Agreement in front of a notary first. Then build the rest of the packet around it.

WITH CHILDREN, FINISH THE CLASS FIRST

A dissolution is fully agreed, and the hearing is 30 to 90 days out, where both spouses must appear. If you have minor children, both parents must finish the Assisting Our Kids class before that final hearing.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition for Dissolution https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Both spouses sign; opens the joint case
Separation Agreement https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Your signed terms; notarize this first
Affidavit of Income & Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required by local rule
Affidavit of Property https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
Parenting plan + worksheet https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the plan and support math
IV-D application https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Allen DR forms	Required before any support order

REQUIRED**Assisting Our Kids (A-OK)**

In a divorce or dissolution with children, both parents take this online class, the 3-hour version, for \$30. File a Notice of Completion after. Confirm the current length and fee with the court.

MEDIATION

The court's domestic relations magistrates offer mediation to help parents finalize terms. It is never used for a domestic violence case or to decide a protection order.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed in the Domestic Relations Division, through the Clerk of Courts. Allen uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms plus a few local affidavits.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Divorce https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Starts the lawsuit; with or without children
Affidavit of Income & Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Your financial picture
Affidavit of Property https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the UCCJEA affidavit
Motion for Temporary Orders https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	File if you want orders during the case

Want orders during the case?

You can ask for temporary support or a parenting schedule while the divorce is pending. You file a motion with a sworn affidavit and a \$25 fee. See the next page for how Allen handles these.

DON'T FORGET THE CLASS

A divorce with children also requires the Assisting Our Kids class before the final hearing. Register, complete it, and file your Notice of Completion so the case is not delayed.

TEMPORARY ORDERS

Getting orders while the case runs.

A divorce can take months. Temporary orders set the rules in the meantime — things like temporary support or a parenting schedule.

How you ask

You file a motion for temporary orders with a sworn affidavit and a \$25 fee. If the affidavit shows an immediate need, the court can grant a restraining order without a hearing first, then serve it by certified mail.

The response window

If the court grants an order without notice, the affected party can respond or request an oral hearing within 14 days, and a hearing is set within 28 days. On temporary support or custody, the responding party has 14 days to respond.

EMERGENCIES

An emergency order needs a sworn affidavit showing the specific, immediate need. If the safety issue involves violence, a protection order may be the faster tool. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, the class, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Allen County requires a parenting class and handles support through the county agency.

SOLE CUSTODY

Residential parent and legal custodian

One parent is the residential parent and legal custodian. The other parent usually has parenting time. Ohio does not use the words “full” or “primary” custody.

SHARED PARENTING

A shared parenting plan

Both parents share rights and duties under a written plan. Shared parenting is not the same as equal time. The schedule is whatever the plan or order says.

The parenting class

Assisting Our Kids is required in a divorce or dissolution with children, and in many post-decree parenting cases. It is a 3-hour online class for \$30. The court can excuse it in limited situations.

CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA

The Allen County child support agency handles support. Reach it at (419) 224-7133. Support is set under Ohio's guidelines, collected by income withholding, and paid through the state.

THE REST OF A DIVORCE

Spousal support, property, and other paths.

Beyond custody and child support, a divorce sorts out spousal support and divides what you own and owe.

Spousal support

The court can order one spouse to support the other for a set time. Ohio weighs income, the length of the marriage, health, and other factors. There is no fixed formula.

Property and debt

Ohio divides marital property and debt fairly. Fair does not always mean a 50-50 split. Property you brought into the marriage may count as separate.

Legal separation and annulment

Both are filed in the Domestic Relations Division for the same \$375 deposit. Legal separation sets terms without ending the marriage. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

A note on dividing retirement

If a divorce divides a pension or retirement account, it takes a separate order called a QDRO, which costs \$75 to file here. Getting the wording right matters, and a mistake can cost real money later, so many people use a lawyer for this step.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing an Allen County order.

Life changes after a case ends. Post-decree motions stay in the same Domestic Relations case that issued your decree.

MODIFY A FORMER ENTRY**\$275**

To change custody, support, or another order

FILE A QDRO**\$75**

To split a retirement account after the decree

OBJECT TO A RELOCATION**\$100**

To challenge a parent's notice to move

Modifying and enforcing

To change custody or support, you file a motion to modify a former entry for \$275. Support changes can also start through the county agency at (419) 224-7133.

MOVING WITH THE CHILDREN

If the other parent files a notice to relocate and you object, you file an objection for \$100. File it on time and follow Ohio's notice rules so your parenting time is protected.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and the class.

Allen County offers ways to settle disputes. It also offers ways to give the court good information about the children.

Mediation

The court's domestic relations magistrates offer mediation to help parents reach an agreement on their own. It is never used for a domestic violence case or to decide a protection order.

Guardians ad litem

The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to look into the children's needs in a contested case. The guardian's fees are set by the court.

Assisting Our Kids

This required online class, the 3-hour version for \$30, teaches parents how to lower conflict and protect their children. Finish it before the final hearing.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Two minutes to a clear next step.

Gavvl's Find My Service quiz gives you a recommendation and your payment options. Or talk with our team about full or limited-scope help in Allen County.

Find My Service · gavvl.com/find-my-service

Get started · gavvl.com/start

Call · (844) 694-2885

Email · support@gavvl.com

PROTECTION ORDERS

When safety comes first.

A civil protection order can order someone to stay away. Ohio has one for family or household members and one for stalking by others. Your safety drives the timeline.

FILING FEE	FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD	SOMEONE ELSE	FINAL ORDER
\$0 to petitioner	DVCPO	Stalking order	Up to 5 years

Two orders, routed by relationship

A protection order against a family or household member, or a co-parent, is a DVCPO under R.C. 3113.31. Against someone who is not, it is a civil stalking order under R.C. 2903.214. Both are free, and you sign the petition before a notary or deputy clerk.

Where to file

A DVCPO is filed at the Clerk's office on the second floor of the Courthouse. A stalking order is filed in Room 209A. If the person to be restrained is under 18, the case goes to the Juvenile Court instead.

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER NOW

If you or your children are in danger right now, call 911. A protection order is a civil court process, not an emergency response. The court can grant a same-day emergency order, then hold a full hearing.

PART TWO

The Juvenile Court is for parents who were never married.

Were the parents never married? Then custody, parenting time, and child support are decided in the Juvenile Court, before Judge Kohlrieser.

Parentage comes first

In Ohio, the mother of a child born outside marriage is the only legal custodian until a court says otherwise. So a father usually has to prove he is the father first. You can do that by a signed form, through the child support agency, or by a court case.

Filing for custody as an unmarried parent

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Parentage and Custody https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Uniform Form 23	Sets parentage, custody, parenting time
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required with a custody filing
Child support worksheet https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required when support is at issue
Application for Child Support https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Juvenile Court or CSEA	Sets up the support case with the agency

A FLAT FILING DEPOSIT

A civil juvenile case, like custody, parenting time, or parentage, costs \$125 to file, and a motion to modify a former entry is \$75. The Juvenile Court is at 1000 Wardhill Avenue, (419) 227-5531.

AFTER A JUVENILE ORDER

Changing orders and CPS cases.

Juvenile orders can change as children grow. Some cases move fast.

Modifying a juvenile order

To change custody, parenting time, or support, you file a motion in the existing case, which costs \$75. Support changes can also start through the county agency at (419) 224-7133.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Court, and there is no deposit to file them. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak for the child. To report concerns, call Children Services at (419) 227-8590, or 911 for danger.

A NOTE ON PARENTING CASES

When parents were never married, custody and parenting time start in the Juvenile Court rather than the divorce court. The same court also handles parentage, so a single case can sort out fatherhood and custody together.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the Probate Court, before Judge Kohlrieser, who also leads the Juvenile Court. Here is the basic shape.

COSTS ARE ITEMIZED, NOT ONE FLAT FEE

Allen County adds up adoption costs item by item rather than charging one deposit. The pieces are small — the petition, docketing, filing, and mailing fees. You can file a motion to wait on the deposit until the final hearing. Ask Probate for your total at 1000 Wardhill Avenue.

1

File the petition in Probate

File the Ohio Petition for Adoption of a Minor (Form 18.0). Add the child's birth certificate. For a stepparent, add the marriage certificate too.

2

Address consent

The other parent usually must consent. A court can find consent is not required in some cases, such as a year of no contact or support. A child 12 or older also consents.

3

Complete any required steps

The court sets a hearing and orders notice. A stepparent case is often simpler than an agency adoption. Ask the Probate Court what your adoption type needs.

4

Attend the hearing

If the court says yes, it can issue an interlocutory order and then a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Allen County.

Gavvl is a modern Ohio family-law firm serving all 88 counties. We pair skilled lawyers with easy-to-use tech and clear pricing. You choose how much help you need.

FULL REPRESENTATION

An attorney handles the whole case

From the first consult through final orders: strategy, every filing, all court dates, and negotiating. Best for contested, complex, or high-conflict cases. Billed as a retainer plus hourly fees.

LIMITED-SCOPE (FLAT FEE)

Hire us for specific tasks

Pay a flat fee per service — drafting and filing, one hearing, advice, or document review. Best for uncontested cases and tighter budgets. Not built for high-conflict cases that need steady advocacy.

Ways to pay

Your options depend on the service model. Limited-scope work has the widest range: pay in full, Affirm, Klarna, or PayPal Pay Later. Gavvl Direct is an in-house plan with no credit check. Financed amounts carry 19% annual interest, compounded monthly. We work out your exact payment when you enroll.

START IN TWO MINUTES

Take the Find My Service quiz at gavvl.com/find-my-service. You get a recommendation and your payment options. Or call (844) 694-2885. Consultations are low-cost.

BEFORE YOU GO

Important disclosures.

Please read these notes about how to use this guide.

INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

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FEES AND PROCEDURES CHANGE

The court information in this guide was verified as of June 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Allen County courts before you file.

AWARDS AND REVIEWS

Any awards, ratings, and reviews reflect the experiences of other clients and the opinions of rating organizations. They are not a guarantee or prediction of the outcome of your case. Every case is different.

JURISDICTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

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