

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Ashland County

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

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- 01 Ashland splits family law between two courts. See which one hears your case.

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

 - 03 Learn how Ashland decides temporary orders on paper, often without a hearing.

 - 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 Ashland County.

01

Which court handles this?

Ashland has no separate divorce court. The Common Pleas General and Domestic Relations Divisions hear divorce and dissolution. A combined Juvenile and Probate court handles unmarried-parent custody and adoption.

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 Ashland 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.

E-FILING IS THE NORM

On the Common Pleas side, e-filing is required once you register. Protection-order petitions can still be filed on paper with the court's approval. Check the deposit and required forms before you file either way.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Use this guide like a map, not a rulebook.	2
Which court is actually handling your case?	4
The Common Pleas court ends marriages.	5
The dissolution packet, step by step.	6
Filing a divorce when you do not agree.	8
How Ashland decides them — usually on paper.	9
Custody, parenting time, and child support in a divorce.	10
Spousal support, property, and other paths.	11
Changing or enforcing an Ashland County order.	12
Mediation, GALs, and home investigations.	13
When safety comes first.	14
Juvenile Court is for parents who were never married.	15
Filing for custody as an unmarried parent	15
Changing orders and CPS cases.	16
Adoption is handled by the Probate Division.	17
How Gavvl Law can help in Ashland County.	18
Important disclosures.	19

QUESTION ONE

Which court is actually handling your case?

One family can touch more than one court. Ashland County splits family law between two courts in the same building. Start with the relationship, and with the decision you need a judge to make.

MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED

General & DR Divisions

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

WHO HEARS IT

Judge David R. Stimpert;
Magistrates Bates and Lange.

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Division

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

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Karen DeSanto
Kellogg.

ADOPTION

Probate Division

Stepparent, kinship, and adult adoption, plus name changes and marriage licenses.

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Kellogg — adoption needs a lawyer (see Part 3).

Two courts, one address

The Common Pleas court and the combined Juvenile and Probate court both sit at 142 West Second Street in Ashland. But they have separate clerks, separate fee schedules, and separate local rules. Filing with the wrong clerk costs time, so confirm which court fits before you build your packet.

PART ONE

The Common Pleas court ends marriages.

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

WHERE YOU FILE	WITH CHILDREN	WITHOUT CHILDREN	RESIDENCY
Clerk of Courts	\$425	\$375	6 mo. Ohio / 90 days here

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. Add child support if you have children.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses file together. They ask the court to approve a signed Separation Agreement. The court sets a hearing about 45 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 DEPENDS ON CHILDREN

Ashland charges \$425 for a divorce or dissolution with children, and \$375 without. Legal separation is \$375. The deposit goes toward your real costs. The balance is billed or refunded at the end. You must live in Ohio six months and in Ashland County 90 days before filing a divorce.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution packet, step by step.

Dissolution mixes Ohio Supreme Court forms with a few Ashland County local forms. Sign the Separation Agreement in front of a notary first. Then build the rest of the packet around it.

YOU SET YOUR OWN HEARING DATE

In Ashland, the person who files gets the final hearing date from the court at filing, and must tell both parties. The court does not mail the dissolution hearing notice for you. The hearing is set about 45 days out, and never more than 90.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Form 17 — Petition and Waiver of Service 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
Form 19 — 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 1 — Income & Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Each spouse files a separate one
Affidavit 2 — Property & Debt https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Each spouse files a separate one
Form 20 or 21 — Parenting Plan https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; must meet Local Rule 20.08
Form 2.00 Case Designation + Form 3.00 DRH https://ashlandcommonpleas.com/forms	Common Pleas forms	Local cover and case-type sheets
Form 12.00 — Waiver of Magistrate's Decision https://ashlandcommonpleas.com/forms	Common Pleas forms	Bring to the hearing; a magistrate hears it

WITH CHILDREN**More forms apply**

Add a separate Parenting Proceeding affidavit for each spouse, a child support worksheet signed by both, the IV-D application (emailed, not filed), and the Form 5.00 paternity waiver. Both parents take the parenting class.

CHANGED YOUR MIND?

A motion to convert a dissolution into a divorce must be filed within 90 days of the petition. File it later and the court will dismiss it. If agreement is shaky, think carefully before choosing dissolution.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed with the Clerk of Courts, and e-filed once you register. Ashland mixes its local forms with the Ohio Supreme Court forms. File the whole initial packet together or the court may refuse it.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Form 6 or 7 — Complaint for Divorce https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Form 7 with children; Form 6 without
Affidavit 1 — Income & Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With pay stubs and tax returns
Affidavit 2 — Property & Debt https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
Affidavits 3 & 4 — Parenting and Insurance https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; notarized
Form 4.00 — Judgment Entry of Injunctions https://ashlandcommonpleas.com/forms	Common Pleas forms	The automatic mutual restraining order
Affidavit 5 — 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

Restraining orders are automatic
 You do not have to ask for basic restraining orders. The court issues its standard Judgment Entry of Injunctions (Form 4.00) in every divorce, annulment, and legal separation. It is served with the summons.

IF YOUR SPOUSE WILL NOT RESPOND
 That is an uncontested, default-style divorce. After 28 days with no answer, you can ask for a final hearing. It is set at least 42 days after service and within four months of filing.

TEMPORARY ORDERS

How Ashland decides them — usually on paper.

A divorce can take months. Temporary orders set the rules in the meantime. Ashland's method is unusual and worth knowing before you file.

The non-oral review

You ask for temporary orders by filing Affidavit 5 with your first papers. The court then reads the affidavits and issues a temporary order without a hearing. That happens 21 days after filing, or 14 days after the request is served, whichever is later.

If you want an actual hearing

You can still get one. File a written Request for Temporary Order Hearing within 14 days after the temporary order is journalized, and say what you dispute. The court sets that hearing within 28 days.

EMERGENCIES AND EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE HOME

A true no-notice order, like making a spouse leave the home, requires sworn facts showing real danger or the other listed grounds under Local Rule 20.11. The other party can request a hearing within 14 days. If there is domestic violence, a protection order is the faster tool — see the protection-order section. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, parenting time, and child support in a divorce.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. The right words help you read the forms and talk to the court.

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 is required

In any case with children, both parents complete the court's Divorcing Parents Education Program, taught by Advocates for Families (Local Rule 20.22). The court issues a Parent Education Order, then each parent schedules directly with the program.

CONFIRM THE CLASS DETAILS

The class cost, length, and whether it is online or in person are not published. Call Advocates for Families at (419) 281-3788, or the DR Judicial Assistant at (419) 282-4290, for the current cost, schedule, and how the certificate reaches the court.

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 follow the divorce track in the Common Pleas court. The deposit for legal separation is \$375. Annulment is rare and has narrow legal grounds.

A note on QDROs and retirement

If a divorce divides a retirement account, it usually takes a Qualified Domestic Relations Order, or QDRO, to actually split the account with the plan. Ashland charges \$125 for each QDRO. Getting the language right matters, so many people use a lawyer for this step.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing an Ashland County order.

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

POST-DECREE MOTION**\$250**

To modify custody, parenting time, or support after the decree

AGREED JUDGMENT ENTRY**\$75**

When both sides already agree on the change

NOTICE OF INTENT TO RELOCATE**\$25**

Filed before a parent moves with the children

Modifying and enforcing

Changes to custody or support are filed as post-decree motions in your original case. Support enforcement can also run through the child support agency. In support and parenting-time contempt, attorney-fee awards are mandatory by local rule.

CONFIRM REGISTRATION OF OUT-OF-STATE ORDERS

Ashland charges \$100 to register a foreign support order or judgment, but the step-by-step custody registration process is not fully published. Confirm the procedure with the Clerk's Legal Division at (419) 282-4242.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and home investigations.

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

Mediation

The court can order mediation in any divorce or custody case (Local Rule 17). In parenting cases it is often set two to three months after temporary orders. Mediation cannot be used to decide a protection order.

Guardians ad litem

The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak to the children's best interests. The usual deposit is \$1,500, with fees presumed reasonable up to \$100 an hour and \$5,000 per case.

Home investigations

In a contested parenting case, the court can order a home investigation. Pre-decree, the cost is split evenly. The current rate is kept on file with the court, not published.

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 Ashland 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 domestic violence civil protection order (DVCPO) can order someone to stay away. It can also set temporary parenting and support terms. Your safety drives the timeline.

FILING FEE	SERVICE	HEARD BY	FORMS
\$0 to petitioner	Same day as journalized	A magistrate	Ohio standard set

How it works here
 DVCPO petitions are filed with the Common Pleas court under R.C. 3113.31. There is no filing fee. The Clerk issues the order for service the same day it is journalized. Initial protection-order papers can be filed on paper, even though other filings are electronic.

Call ahead for the ex parte hearing
 Ohio law allows a same-day ex parte hearing. Ashland's walk-in window and daily cutoff are not posted. Call the DR and CPO Judicial Assistant, Heather Adkins, at (419) 282-4290 before you go, so you arrive in time.

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.

PART TWO

Juvenile Court is for parents who were never married.

Were the parents never married to each other? Then custody, parenting time, parentage, and child support are decided in the Juvenile Division, before Judge Kellogg.

Fast DNA testing

If parentage is in question, either party can ask for genetic testing. The Juvenile Division orders it right away, without a hearing. The person who asks pays for the test up front, and the cost is added to the case at the end.

Filing for custody as an unmarried parent

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Parentage and custody packet https://acjuvenileprobate.org	Juvenile Division (SC forms)	Establishes parentage, custody, support
Affidavit 1 — Income & Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Filed with the complaint or motion
Affidavit 3 — Parenting Proceeding https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With any custody or parenting-time filing
IV-D Application (JFS 07076) https://acjuvenileprobate.org	Juvenile Division	Filed with the complaint, unlike the DR side

COSTS AND THE PARENTING SCHEDULE

A two-party custody, parenting-time, or paternity case has a \$175 deposit, plus \$25 for each extra party. A support-only or other civil case is \$125. The Juvenile Division publishes its own Parenting Time Order, which is separate from the divorce side's schedule. Pull it from the court's website.

AFTER A JUVENILE ORDER

Changing orders and CPS cases.

Juvenile orders can change as children grow. The court works on set time standards to keep cases moving.

Modifying a juvenile order

To change custody, parenting time, or support, you file a motion in the existing case. A fully agreed change has its own packet, with a signed waiver and consent and proposed entry. Support changes can also start through the CSEA at (419) 282-5008.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Division. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem or a CASA volunteer for the children. To report suspected abuse, call (419) 282-5001.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

The Juvenile Division's intake steps for registering an out-of-state order and for relocation are not fully published. Ask the Juvenile Clerk at (419) 282-4205 how those filings work before you start.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Division.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the Probate Division. Two local rules catch people off guard.

A LAWYER, AND A YEAR OF MARRIAGE

First, you need a lawyer for most adoptions. Adult adoptions and re-doing a foreign adoption are the exceptions. Second, if you are married, you must be married at least one year before the court can approve the adoption.

MINOR ADOPTION

\$350

Includes two certified copies of the new birth certificate

ADULT ADOPTION

\$122

Foreign adoption is \$100

PAYMENT

No cards

Probate takes cash, check, or money order — no debit or credit cards

1

Hire a lawyer and file the petition

Your lawyer files the petition with the \$350 deposit, the background checks, and the required accounts. The Probate Clerk is at (419) 282-4209.

2

Address consent

A parent's consent is usually needed. The court can waive it if a parent had little contact, or did not help support the child, for the year before you file.

3

Complete the home study

An assessor visits the home and files a report at least 10 days before the hearing. Your lawyer can ask for a copy.

4

Attend the hearing

If the court says yes, it signs a final decree of adoption. A new birth certificate follows, with two certified copies.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Ashland 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, and required for adoptions here. 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.

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FEES AND PROCEDURES CHANGE

The court information in this guide was verified as of June 10, 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Ashland 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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