

## PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

# Family Law in Brown County

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

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- 01** See which court hears your case, and where each one sits in Brown County.

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

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

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

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## 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 Brown County.

01

## Which court handles this?

The Domestic Relations Court hears divorce and dissolution. The Juvenile Court handles custody for parents who were never married. Probate handles adoption. They sit at two addresses in Georgetown.

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 Brown 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 NOTE ON PAYING THE CLERK

The Domestic Relations Clerk takes cash, money order, or check, but not credit cards. The Probate and Juvenile court takes cards but not personal checks. Plan your payment before you go.

### 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.

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## QUESTION ONE

# Which court is actually handling your case?

One family can touch more than one court. In Brown County they sit at two addresses in Georgetown. Start with the relationship, and with what you need a judge to decide.

**MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED**

## General & DR Division

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

**WHERE**

101 S. Main St. Judge Gusweiler; Magistrate Blanton.

**PARENTS NEVER MARRIED**

## Juvenile Court

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

**WHERE**

510 E. State St. Judge Val E. Lewis II.

**ADOPTION**

## Probate Court

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

**WHERE**

510 E. State St. Judge Lewis, same as Juvenile.

### Two addresses to know

The Domestic Relations Court sits at 101 South Main Street. The combined Juvenile and Probate Court is a few blocks away at 510 East State Street, both in Georgetown. Each court keeps its own forms and fees, so file with the right one for your case.

## PART ONE

# The Domestic Relations Court ends marriages.

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

WHERE YOU FILE	DIVORCE	DISSOLUTION	RESIDENCY
Clerk, 1st floor	\$250	\$250	90 days in Brown County

## 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 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.

## ONE SIMPLE DEPOSIT

Brown County charges a flat \$250 deposit for a divorce or a dissolution — there is no higher fee for cases with children. The only child-related add-on is a \$25 home-investigation fee. To file here, one spouse must have lived in Ohio six months and in Brown County 90 days.

## DISSOLUTION

# The dissolution packet, step by step.

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

## BOTH OF YOU MUST SHOW UP

A dissolution is fully agreed. You file together, and the court sets a hearing 30 to 90 days out. Both spouses must appear and affirm the agreement. If you stop agreeing, you can convert the dissolution to a divorce before the decree, at no extra fee.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Petition for Dissolution + Waiver</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Both spouses sign; opens the joint case
<a href="#">Separation Agreement</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Your signed terms; notarize this first
<a href="#">Property and Financial Statement</a> <a href="https://browncountyohiocommonpleascourt.us/">https://browncountyohiocommonpleascourt.us/</a>	Brown County forms	Sworn statement required by local rule
<a href="#">Financial affidavits</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Income and property details
<a href="#">Parenting plan + support worksheet</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the plan and support math
<a href="#">Decree of Dissolution</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	The judgment the court signs

**WITH CHILDREN****The parenting class**

If you have children, both spouses take the Helping Children Cope With Family Separation class before the final hearing. It is an evening Zoom session that costs \$60, for adults only.

**REGISTER EARLY**

The class runs monthly on Thursday evenings through Lifespan Solutions. Register by phone at (513) 324-3999, at least two weeks before the class date. The court rarely waives it.

DIVORCE

# Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed with the Clerk of Courts on the first floor. Brown uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms. The financial and parenting affidavits go in with the Complaint.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Complaint for Divorce</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Starts the lawsuit; with or without children
<a href="#">Affidavit of Income &amp; Expenses</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Notarized; filed with the Complaint
<a href="#">Affidavit of Property &amp; Debt</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
<a href="#">UCCJEA + parenting affidavits</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; notarized
<a href="#">Affidavit 5 — Temporary Orders</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	File if you want orders during the case

**Want orders during the case?**  
 File a Request for 75(N) Temporary Orders with Affidavit 5, your financial affidavit, the UCCJEA affidavit, and a support worksheet. The court decides it on the papers. See the next page for the timing.

**IF YOU CANNOT FIND YOUR SPOUSE**  
 Service can be by publication if you cannot find the other spouse. The extra deposit for publication is \$150, on top of the regular deposit. You arrange the notice through the court.

## TEMPORARY ORDERS

# Getting orders while the case runs.

A divorce can take months. Temporary orders, called 75(N) orders, set the rules in the meantime — things like temporary support or who stays in the home.

## Decided on the papers

You file a Request for 75(N) Temporary Orders with supporting affidavits. The court decides it on the affidavits, with no oral testimony. The order will not issue until at least 15 days after the request is served.

## The 14-day and 28-day rules

The other party can file a counter-affidavit within 14 days of being served. After the order is journalized, either party can ask for an oral hearing, which is held within 28 days. The order stays in effect meanwhile.

## WHAT CAN AND CANNOT BE DONE WITHOUT NOTICE

Only a narrow status-quo order can issue without notice — to protect safety, keep insurance in place, and stop hiding property or moving the children. Temporary support and custody are never granted that way, and asking a spouse to leave the home is set for a hearing within 28 days. 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

In any divorce, dissolution, or legal separation with children, parents take Helping Children Cope With Family Separation. It is an evening Zoom class that costs \$60. In a divorce, the parent who files takes it before the case is scheduled.

**CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA**

The Brown County child support agency handles support. Reach it at (937) 378-6414. Support is collected by income withholding, and paid through the state, not directly between parents.

## 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. The deposit is the same flat \$250 as a divorce. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

## A note on staying separate

A legal separation lets the court divide property and set support while you stay legally married. Some people choose it for religious reasons or to keep a health plan. If you later want to fully end the marriage, you would still file for divorce or dissolution.

## AFTER THE DECREE

# Changing or enforcing a Brown County order.

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

**POST-DECREE MOTION****\$100**

To modify, enforce, or show cause after the decree

**OBJECTIONS****\$150**

To object to a magistrate's decision

**HOME INVESTIGATION****\$25**

Added in a case with children

**Modifying and enforcing**

To change custody or support, or to enforce an order, you file a post-decree motion in your original case. The deposit is \$100. Support changes can also start through the child support agency.

**MOVING WITH THE CHILDREN**

A parent who plans to move should follow Ohio's relocation notice rules before moving. Ask the Domestic Relations Clerk at (937) 378-4740 which form your decree needs and how far ahead to file it.

## HELP ALONG THE WAY

# Mediation, GALs, and home studies.

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

## Mediation

On the juvenile side, the court offers a mediation and early evaluation program to help parents agree. The court can order it in a parenting dispute. Mediation is never used to decide a protection order.

## Guardians ad litem

The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to look into the children's needs and speak to their best interests. On the juvenile side, the GAL deposit is \$750.

## Home studies

The court can order a home study to learn about a child's living situation. The fee is \$150 in the county, or \$200 out of county. Adults in the home pay for their own background checks.

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 Brown County.

Find My Service · [gavvl.com/find-my-service](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service)

Get started · [gavvl.com/start](https://gavvl.com/start)

Call · (844) 694-2885

Email · [support@gavvl.com](mailto: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 custody and support. Your safety drives the timeline.

FILING FEE	FILING CUTOFF	EX PARTE HEARING	FORMS
\$0 to petitioner	3:15 p.m.	Within 24 hours	Ohio standard set

## How it works here

DVCPO petitions are filed with the Clerk in the Domestic Relations Division under R.C. 3113.31. There is no fee. The Clerk takes petitions until 3:15 p.m. while court is in session. You file in the county where you live.

## A fast ex parte hearing

A domestic violence petition not heard by 4 p.m. is heard within 24 hours of filing. A full hearing follows, and a final order can last up to five years. It can order no contact, use of the home, and temporary parenting terms.

## 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? Then custody, parenting time, and child support are decided in the Juvenile Court on East State Street, before Judge Lewis.

## 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
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Complaint for Parentage and Custody</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Juvenile Court (local + SC)	Sets parentage, custody, parenting time
<a href="https://browncountyprobatejuvenilecourt.com/">Filing Packet for Complaint</a> <a href="https://browncountyprobatejuvenilecourt.com/">https://browncountyprobatejuvenilecourt.com/</a>	Juvenile Court forms	The county's guided packet for new cases
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">UCCJEA Parenting Proceeding Affidavit</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required with a custody filing
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Support worksheet</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required when support is at issue

### COSTS AND FILING

The Juvenile Court is at 510 East State Street, (937) 378-6726, and it offers e-filing. A new custody or parentage case costs \$120 to file, and reactivating an old case is \$90. The agency can order a free DNA test if parentage is in question.

## 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, or reactivate a closed one for \$90. Support changes can also start through the agency at (937) 378-6414.

## Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Court. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem for the children. Low-income parents may ask for an appointed lawyer.

## CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

The fee to register an out-of-state custody or support order is not listed on the juvenile schedule. Ask the Juvenile Court at (937) 378-6726 what it costs and how to file before you start.

## PART THREE

# Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the Probate Court on East State Street, before Judge Lewis. Here is the basic shape and cost.

**MINOR ADOPTION****\$340–\$440**

Lower without publication, higher with; plus \$500 to the assessor

**ASSESSOR HOME STUDY****\$500**

Paid directly to the assessor

**ADULT ADOPTION****\$320**

A home study is not required

**1****File the petition in Probate**

File the Petition for Adoption with the child's birth certificate and, for a stepparent, the marriage certificate. Probate is at 510 East State Street, (937) 378-6549.

**2****Address consent**

The other parent's consent is usually needed, and a child aged 10 or older must also consent. The court can waive a parent's consent for a year of no contact or support.

**3****Complete the home study**

An assessor completes a home study. The fee is \$500, paid directly to the assessor. Adults in the home pay for their own background checks.

**4****Attend the hearing**

If the court says yes, Judge Lewis signs a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

## PART FOUR

# How Gavvl Law can help in Brown 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](https://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**

This guide explains how things generally work in Brown County, but it cannot account for the facts of your case. Reading it, downloading it, or contacting Gavvl Law does not make you a client or create an attorney-client relationship. Only a signed engagement agreement does that. For advice about your own situation, talk with a licensed Ohio attorney.

**FEES AND PROCEDURES CHANGE**

The court information in this guide was verified as of June 11, 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Brown 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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