

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Butler County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Hamilton and across Butler 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 Butler County handles family law across its courts.

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

 - 03** Find the right form, the filing system, 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 Butler County.

01

Which court handles this?

Married couples file divorce or dissolution in the Domestic Relations Court. Unmarried parents file custody in the Juvenile Court. Adoptions go to the Probate Court. Each is its own office.

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 Butler 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.

MOST FILINGS GO THROUGH E-SUBMISSION

In Butler County, almost every domestic relations filing goes through the E-Submission portal, and Case Management reviews it for local-rule compliance before it is accepted. Protection orders are the exception.

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. Butler County has separate courts for divorce, juvenile matters, and adoption. Start with the relationship, and with what you need a judge to decide.

MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED

Domestic Relations Court

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

WHERE

315 High St., 2nd Fl. (513)
887-3100.

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Court

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

WHERE

280 N. Fair Ave. (513)
887-3317.

ADOPTION

Probate Court

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

NOTE

Confirm current details with the court.

Three separate courts

Divorce and dissolution are heard in the Domestic Relations Court on High Street. Unmarried-parent custody goes to the Juvenile Court on Fair Avenue. Adoption is filed in the county Probate Court. 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 Domestic Relations Court. The first real question is simple: can both spouses sign a full agreement?

WHERE YOU FILE	MOST FILINGS	PARENT CLASS	RESIDENCY
DR Court	E-Submission	Required	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.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses sign the paperwork and submit it to Case Management for review. After it is filed, the court sets a final hearing where both spouses must appear. It must finish within 90 days.

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.

CONFIRM THE DEPOSIT WITH THE CLERK

Butler County's divorce and dissolution filing deposit is set by the Clerk of Courts and is not published in this guide. Confirm the current amount with the Clerk at (513) 887-3278 before you file. If the court appoints a guardian for the children, a \$1,200 deposit applies.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution path, step by step.

Dissolution uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms. In Butler County, the signed packet goes through Case Management first, then to the Clerk.

SUBMIT, FILE, THEN ATTEND THE HEARING

Both spouses sign and submit the packet to Case Management for review. Once approved, you file with the Clerk and pay. The court sets a final hearing where both spouses must appear. The case must finish within 90 days.

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	Each spouse's finances
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
Parent education notice (DR628) https://drcourt.bcoho.gov/forms/index.php	Butler DR Court	With children; register within 15 days
Proposed Decree https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	The judgment the court signs

GOOD TO KNOW**The 90-day window**

A dissolution must be completed within 90 days of filing or it is dismissed. If you stop agreeing in that window, you can convert the case to a divorce so the court can decide the open issues.

MEDIATION

The court offers mediation, free when handled by court staff, to help parents agree on parenting and bills. 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 Court through E-Submission, after Case Management reviews it. The path splits based on whether the other spouse answers.

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
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
Temporary Orders (DR301) https://drcourt.bcohoio.gov/forms/index.php	Butler DR Court	File if you want orders during the case
Parent education notice (DR628) https://drcourt.bcohoio.gov/forms/index.php	Butler DR Court	With children; register within 15 days

If no one answers

The other spouse has 28 days after service to answer. If no answer comes, the court sets an uncontested hearing. You mail the approved decree to the defendant 14 days before the hearing and appear with a witness.

IF THEY DO ANSWER

If the other spouse answers, the case becomes contested. The court sets a scheduling conference, and each side must exchange financial disclosure within 30 days. A trial is set if issues are not resolved.

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 request temporary orders without an oral hearing by filing the DR301 affidavit, usually with your complaint or answer. The court can decide it on the written statements once service is perfected.

The response window

The other party has 14 days after service to file a counter-motion, and the court does not issue an order before that 14-day point. So the timing is built around service, not the filing date.

THE AUTOMATIC RESTRAINING ORDER

A mutual restraining order attaches to every divorce, legal separation, and annulment complaint automatically. It stops both spouses from things like hiding assets or removing the children from Ohio. Asking a spouse to leave the home needs a hearing. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, the class, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Butler 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

Parents filing a divorce or dissolution with children take a 4-hour online class through FESC, called Helping Families Succeed During Divorce. Register within 15 days of filing. The two spouses cannot attend the same session.

CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA

The Butler County child support agency handles support. Reach it at (513) 887-3362. 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 Court. 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 usually takes a separate order to split it with the plan. 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 a Butler County order.

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

Modifying and enforcing

To change custody or support, or to enforce an order, you file a motion using the court's motion code list, then attend a hearing. Support changes can also start through the county agency at (513) 887-3362.

Mediation can help after, too

Butler County offers post-decree mediation for custody and parenting-time disputes, using either a court magistrate or a community mediator from the court's approved list.

A FEW FILING RULES TO KNOW

To change a hearing date, file a continuance at least 7 days ahead, or 3 days for a protection order. There are no motions for reconsideration here — only a request to clarify, filed within 14 days.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and family services.

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

Mediation

The court offers mediation, free when handled by court staff, to help parents reach an agreement. 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. A deposit of \$1,200 applies to cover the guardian's fees.

Family Services Unit

By court order, this unit can supervise parenting time or run a home investigation, with interviews and record checks, then give the court a written report.

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 Butler 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 can order someone to stay away. In Butler County you file it in person, on a walk-in basis. Your safety drives the timeline.

FILING FEE	HOW TO FILE	EX PARTE ORDER	FULL HEARING
\$0 to petitioner	Walk-in	Same day	7–10 business days

How it works here

You file in person at the Domestic Relations Court during set morning and afternoon windows, with photo ID. There is no fee. The court holds a same-day ex parte hearing, then sets a full hearing in 7 to 10 business days.

Help and a key difference

Women Helping Women runs a 24-hour hotline at (513) 381-5610. Note that the automatic restraining order in a divorce is not the same as a protection order; a protection order is a separate filing.

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. Protection orders cannot be filed through E-Submission; use the document submission portal or file in person.

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 on Fair Avenue.

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

COSTS AND FILING

A custody, visitation, or support complaint costs \$165 plus a \$50 service fee. The Juvenile Court is at 280 N. Fair Avenue, (513) 887-3317, and does not accept personal checks.

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 \$165 plus service. Support changes can also start through the county agency at (513) 887-3362.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Court. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak for the child. To report concerns about a child's safety, contact county children services. For immediate danger, call 911.

A NOTE ON RELOCATION

A parent who plans to move files a relocation notice in the Juvenile Court, which costs \$45. File it ahead of time and follow Ohio's notice rules so your parenting time is not disrupted.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions are filed in the county Probate Court under Ohio law. Here is the general shape of the process statewide.

CONFIRM THE BUTLER PROBATE DETAILS

This guide does not list Butler County's probate filing location, judge, or adoption deposit. Confirm those current details, and the exact forms, with the Butler County Probate Court before you file. Adoption is governed statewide by R.C. Chapter 3107.

1

File the petition in Probate

File the Ohio Petition for Adoption of a Minor in the county Probate Court. 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 excuse consent in some cases, such as a year of no contact or support without good reason. A child 12 or older also consents.

3

Complete the home study

Ohio law usually asks for a home study. A stepparent or kinship case can be simpler. Ask the Probate Court which steps your adoption type needs.

4

Attend the hearing

If the court finds the adoption is in the child's best interest, it signs a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Butler 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 Butler 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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