

## PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

# Family Law in Carroll County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Carrollton and across Carroll 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, all in one building in Carrollton.

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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 Carroll County.

01

## Which court handles this?

The General and Domestic Relations Division hears divorce and dissolution. The combined Probate and Juvenile Division handles custody for unmarried parents and adoption. Both sit in one building on Lisbon Street.

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 Carroll 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 OPTIONAL

You may e-file divorce cases through the Clerk's portal, or file in person. But protection-order papers must be filed on paper. Check the deposit and forms before you file.

### 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.

**INSIDE THIS GUIDE**

Use this guide like a map, not a rulebook.	2
Which court is actually handling your case?	4
The Domestic Relations Division ends marriages.	5
The dissolution packet, step by step.	6
Filing a divorce when you do not agree.	8
Getting orders while the case runs.	9
Custody, parenting time, and child support in a divorce.	10
Spousal support, property, and other paths.	11
Changing or enforcing a Carroll County order.	12
Mediation, GALs, and home studies.	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 Carroll County.	18
Important disclosures.	19

## QUESTION ONE

# Which court is actually handling your case?

One family can touch more than one court. In Carroll County they share one building on Lisbon Street, on different floors. 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**

Suite 401. Judge Michael V. Repella II.

**PARENTS NEVER MARRIED**

## Juvenile Division

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

**WHERE**

Suite 202. Judge Sean R.H. Smith.

**ADOPTION**

## Probate Division

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

**WHERE**

Suite 202. Judge Smith, with Juvenile.

### One building, two divisions

The General and Domestic Relations Division sits in Suite 401 at 119 South Lisbon Street. The combined Probate and Juvenile Division is in Suite 202 of the same building. Each keeps its own forms and fees, so 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 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, Suite 401	\$350	\$350	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. 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

Carroll County charges a flat \$350 deposit for a divorce, dissolution, legal separation, or annulment — the same whether or not there are children. The deposit goes toward your real costs, and the balance is billed or refunded at the end. 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 local case form. 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 do not agree on everything, you need a divorce instead.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Petition for 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	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="#">Case Designation Form</a> <a href="https://carrollcountyohio.us/agencies-and-departments/courts/court-of-common-pleas/">https://carrollcountyohio.us/agencies-and-departments/courts/court-of-common-pleas/</a>	Carroll County forms	Mark C with children or D without
<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, every party takes the Successful Co-Parenting class before the final hearing. It is run by OSU Extension and costs \$25 per person, payable in cash on the day.

**REGISTER AND PAY IN CASH**

Register yourself with the OSU Extension Office at (330) 627-4310. The class is in person; taking it online needs the court's approval first. Bring \$25 cash — no checks or cards.

DIVORCE

# Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed with the Clerk of Courts in Suite 401, in person or through the e-filing portal. Carroll 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="#">Case Designation Form</a> <a href="https://carrollcountyohio.us/agencies-and-departments/courts/court-of-common-pleas/">https://carrollcountyohio.us/agencies-and-departments/courts/court-of-common-pleas/</a>	Carroll County forms	Marks the case type for the Clerk
<a href="#">Financial Affidavit</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 expenses; notarized
<a href="#">Health Insurance Affidavit</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	When support is at issue
<a href="#">Affidavit for 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?**  
 You can ask for temporary support or parenting orders while the divorce is pending. In Carroll County, the court sets these motions for a hearing. See the next page for what to file.

**IF YOU CANNOT FIND YOUR SPOUSE**  
 Service can be by publication if you cannot find the other spouse. The extra deposit for publication is \$500. You arrange the notice through the court and pay the publisher.

## 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 who stays in the home.

## Set for a hearing

In Carroll County, the court schedules a hearing on a motion for temporary orders. A motion about child support must include a support worksheet, a Financial Affidavit, and a Private Health Insurance Affidavit. A custody motion needs your sworn affidavit.

## Emergencies

In an urgent situation you can ask for an order without the other side first being heard. The court uses the Ohio standard form for this. How fast it rules depends on the court's docket and when you file.

### CONFIRM THE TIMING WITH THE CLERK

Carroll County does not publish a fixed deadline for the other party to respond to a temporary-orders motion, and how soon the court rules on an emergency request depends on its docket. Confirm the current response and hearing timing with the Clerk at (330) 627-4886. For a domestic violence emergency, see the protection order page. 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, every party takes the Successful Co-Parenting class before the final hearing. It is a \$25 cash class run by OSU Extension. Register at (330) 627-4310.

**CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA**

The Carroll County child support agency handles support. Reach it at (330) 627-5357. 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 General and DR Division. The deposit is the same flat \$350. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

## A note on retirement accounts

If a divorce divides a retirement account, it usually takes a separate order called a QDRO to split it with the plan. Carroll charges just \$65 for each one. Getting the wording right matters, so many people use a lawyer for this step.

## AFTER THE DECREE

# Changing or enforcing a Carroll 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****\$150**

To modify or enforce an order after the decree

**MOTION WITH AGREED ENTRY****\$100**

When both sides already agree on the change

**INTENT TO RELOCATE****\$40**

Filed before a parent moves with the 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 \$150, or \$100 if both sides already agree. Support changes can also start through the child support agency.

**MOVING WITH THE CHILDREN**

A parent who plans to move files a motion of intent to relocate, with a \$40 deposit, before moving. Follow Ohio's relocation notice rules, and ask the Clerk at (330) 627-4886 about the timing.

## HELP ALONG THE WAY

# Mediation, GALs, and home studies.

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

## Mediation

The court can send a parenting dispute to mediation to help parents reach an agreement. Mediation 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 and speak to their best interests in a contested case.

## Parenting class

The Successful Co-Parenting class is its own kind of help. OSU Extension runs it for \$25 per person, and it shows parents how to reduce conflict and support their children.

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 Carroll 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.

<b>FILING FEE</b>	<b>FILED</b>	<b>EX PARTE ORDER</b>	<b>HELP FILING</b>
\$0 to petitioner	On paper	Same day	Victims Assistance

## How it works here

An adult protection order is filed through the Carroll County Victims Assistance Program, which helps you through the process under R.C. 3113.31. There is no fee. Protection order papers are filed on paper, not through the e-filing portal.

## Ex parte, then a full hearing

The court can issue a same-day ex parte order if there is immediate danger. A full hearing follows, usually within days, for the other person to appear. A final order can last up to five years.

## IF YOU ARE IN DANGER NOW

If you or your children are in danger right now, call 911, or the Carroll County Sheriff at (330) 627-2141. 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 combined Probate and Juvenile Division, before Judge Smith.

## 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>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Sets parentage, custody, parenting time
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">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">Parenting plan</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	Sole or shared parenting
<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 A SCHEDULING STEP

The Probate and Juvenile Division is in Suite 202, (330) 627-2323. A new custody, parentage, or support case costs \$150 to file. Before filing for custody or visitation, the court asks you to contact the deputy clerk for a hearing date.

## 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 for \$100, or reopen a closed case for \$100. Support changes can also start through the agency at (330) 627-5357.

## Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Division. To report concerns about a child's safety, call Job and Family Services at (330) 627-2571. For immediate danger, call 911 or the Sheriff at (330) 627-2141.

## A NOTE ON PARENTING CLASSES

In the Probate and Juvenile Division, the judge decides case by case whether a parenting class is required, rather than ordering it in every case the way the divorce side does. Ask the deputy clerk what your case needs.

## PART THREE

# Adoption is handled by the Probate Division.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the combined Probate and Juvenile Division, before Judge Smith. Here is the basic shape and cost.

**STEPARENT ADOPTION****\$300**

The most common family adoption

**PRIVATE ADOPTION****\$500**

For a non-relative placement

**ADULT ADOPTION****\$100**

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 in Suite 202, (330) 627-2323.

**2****Address consent**

The other parent's consent is usually needed, and so is the child's if they are 12 or older. The court can waive a parent's consent for a year of no contact or support.

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

A home study or assessment is usually required, and it is often smaller for a stepparent case than for others.

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

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

## PART FOUR

# How Gavvl Law can help in Carroll 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 Carroll 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 12, 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Carroll 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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