

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Clermont County

A plain-English map of divorce, dissolution, custody, child support, protection orders, and adoption in Clermont County. Which court to use. What it costs. Which forms you need. And the local deadlines that catch people off guard.

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- 01** Find the right Clermont County court before you fill out a single form.

 - 02** See the real filing fees, checked against the court's own fee schedule.

 - 03** Learn the local quirks — like the 2:30 PM protection-order cutoff and the required pre-filing paperwork review.

 - 04** Get the forms, checklists, free clinics, and deadlines for each path.

 - 05** Choose a next step that fits your budget, timeline, and risk.

START HERE

One county, three courts. Start by finding yours.

Clermont County splits family-law cases among three courts. All three sit near each other on Clermont Center Drive in Batavia. The right one depends on your relationship and what you need decided.

01

Married or formerly married?

Go to the Domestic Relations Court. It handles divorce, dissolution, and legal separation. It also decides the custody, support, and property issues inside those cases, and it hears domestic violence protection orders. Part 1 covers it.

02

Never married to the other parent?

Go to the Juvenile Court. It handles paternity, custody, parenting time, and child support for parents who never married. It also hears emergency custody and Children's Services cases. Part 2 covers it.

03

Adopting a child?

Go to the Probate Court. It handles stepparent and kinship (relative) adoptions. Part 3 covers it.

READ THIS FIRST

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Clermont County, but it can't account for the facts of your situation. 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 case, talk with a licensed Ohio attorney.

How to use this guide

Read your part. Skip the rest. Part 1 is the Domestic Relations Court. Part 2 is the Juvenile Court. Part 3 is adoption. Part 4 shows ways to get help if you want it. The full contents are on the next page, and every entry is clickable.

Verified, with sources

Every fee and deadline in this guide was checked against official court sources as of June 11, 2026. Where this guide links a court page, that page is the source — and the place to confirm before you file.

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YOUR COURTS AT A GLANCE

Addresses, phone numbers, and hours — keep this page handy.

All three courts are in Batavia. Bring photo ID. Expect metal detectors, and leave food and drinks in the car.

COURT	ADDRESS AND PHONE	HOURS AND NOTES
Domestic Relations Court domesticcourt.org (https://domesticcourt.org)	2340 Clermont Center Drive, Suite 200, Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 732-7327	Mon–Fri 8:00 AM–4:00 PM. Protection-order petitions are accepted only until 2:30 PM.
Clerk of Courts (DR filings, copies, decrees)	(513) 732-7832 domesticclerkofcourts@clermontcountyoohio.gov	Cash, check, or money order only — no credit cards. Copies cost \$1 per page for pleadings and \$3 per page for orders.
Juvenile Court Court website (https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov)	2340 Clermont Center Drive, Suite 100, Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 732-7696	Mon–Fri 8:00 AM–4:00 PM. Window closed for lunch, 11:45 AM–12:45 PM. Takes cards (with a fee); ATM in the lobby. E-filing available.
Probate Court Forms and info (https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/forms/)	2379 Clermont Center Drive, Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 732-7243	Mon–Fri 8:00 AM–4:00 PM. Closed for lunch, 12:00–1:00 PM.
Child Support (CSEA — Clermont Supports Kids) clermontsupportskids.org (https://clermontsupportskids.org)	2400 Clermont Center Drive, Suite 107, Batavia, OH 45103 (513) 732-7248 · toll-free (800) 571-0943	Mon–Thu 8:00 AM–4:30 PM, Fri to 4:00 PM. Cannot take in-person payments. Pay online, by mail, or by text.

The most useful local fact in this guide

Filing in the Domestic Relations Court without a lawyer? A court Compliance Officer must review your finished paperwork before the Clerk will accept it (Local Rule DR 2). The review is free. It catches missing forms and signatures before they cost you a rejected filing. Build it into your timeline.

FREE HELP

Clermont County has more free legal help than most counties.

These programs can't represent you in court. But each one can review paperwork, answer questions, or point you to a lawyer.

MONTHLY LAW CLINIC**Domestic Court Law Clinic**

A volunteer attorney reviews your documents before you file. A court employee checks form compliance. Held monthly (except July), 9 AM to noon, at the Clermont County Library Administration Building, 326 Broadway Street, Batavia. Free. Details:

domesticcourt.org/law-clinic

(<https://domesticcourt.org/law-clinic>).

LEGAL AID CLINIC**Legal Aid Society Help Clinic**

Volunteer attorneys help self-represented people with divorce, dissolution, and post-decree matters. They can't advise on protection orders. Third and fourth Wednesday of each month, 9 AM–3 PM, at the Domestic Relations Court. Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati: (513) 241-9400.

SECOND WEDNESDAYS**The Ohio Justice Bus**

A mobile legal-aid office parks in the Domestic Court lot the second Wednesday of each month, 10 AM–1 PM. A volunteer attorney gives advice. Court staff help with forms. No cost, no appointment.

NEED A RIDE?**Dial-A-Ride (CTC)**

Door-to-door public transit anywhere in Clermont County, Mon–Sat, 6 AM–6 PM. Adults pay \$4.75 one way. Seniors, riders with disabilities, and small children pay \$2.35. Book up to 14 days ahead. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible.

Lawyer referral

The Clermont County Bar Association runs a lawyer referral line: (513) 732-2050. The Public Defender — (513) 732-7223 — is appointed only in limited situations. One example: defending against contempt, if you qualify financially.

PART ONE

Domestic Relations: ending a marriage in Clermont County.

This court decides divorce, dissolution, and legal separation, plus everything attached to them: parenting, support, property, and protection orders. The biggest early question is simple. Do you and your spouse agree on everything?

QUICK PATHFINDER

Do you both agree on everything?

If yes — on property, debt, support, and parenting — a dissolution may be the calmer, cheaper path. If no, or if your spouse won't take part, choose divorce. Divorce gives the court a process for deadlines, temporary orders, and a trial if needed. You can convert one to the other later with a court form.

BEFORE YOU FILE ANYWHERE

Check residency first

- One spouse must have lived in Ohio at least 6 months before filing (R.C. 3105.03).
- For divorce, the filing spouse generally must have lived in the county at least 90 days.
- Already have a family-law case? File in that case, not a new one.
- Spouses in different states? The first proper filing usually controls where the case happens.

IN THIS PART

- Dissolution — ending a marriage by agreement
- Divorce — starting one, or responding to one
- Temporary orders while the case is pending
- Custody, parenting time, and the words Ohio actually uses
- Child support and spousal support
- Changing orders, contempt, and out-of-state orders
- Objections and appeals
- Property and debt division
- Mediation, GALs, and parenting investigations
- Protection orders (DVCPO) — no filing fee, ever
- Real-life tips and safety resources

Children involved?

If a child of the marriage is under 16, each parent must finish a court-approved parenting class within 45 days after service of the order (Local Rule DR 27). Skipping it can mean contempt. It will also hold up your final hearing. Details are on the parenting pages of this guide.

DISSOLUTION

Dissolution: ending a marriage you've already settled.

A dissolution ends your marriage when you agree on every term — property, debt, support, and parenting — in writing, before you file. The court reviews your agreement and, if approved, makes it a court order called a decree.

FILING DEPOSIT	COURT	FINAL HEARING	ATTENDANCE
\$300 / \$350	Domestic Relations	30–90 days	Both spouses

Dissolution may fit if...

- You both agree the marriage should end.
- You agree on every dollar of property and debt.
- You agree on parenting and support, if you have children.
- You can both sign the papers and attend one short final hearing.

Dissolution is NOT for you if...

Your spouse won't sign, won't share money information, or can't be found.

You need temporary orders while the case is pending.

There is pressure, hidden money, or a safety concern.

In those cases, read the divorce section. Divorce gives the court tools dissolution doesn't have.

Core filing	Petition for Dissolution, signed by both spouses (Supreme Court Form 17)
The agreement	Separation Agreement covering all property, debt, and support (Form 19)
With children	Parenting plan or shared parenting plan, support worksheet, and extra affidavits
Local step	A Compliance Officer reviews your packet before the Clerk accepts it
Final step	One short hearing where you both confirm the agreement
You walk away with	A Decree of Dissolution — your agreement, now an enforceable court order

DISSOLUTION · FORMS

The dissolution packet, form by form.

Ohio's standard forms plus local checklists — start from the court's own dissolution page.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Dissolution packet and checklist https://domesticcourt.org/dissolution-with-without-children	DR Court website	The court's official packet page, with or without children
<p>⚠ Heads up: Local rules require court approval before filing — plan for the Compliance Officer review.</p>		
Petition for Dissolution (Form 17) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form17.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Both spouses ask the court to end the marriage
Separation Agreement (Form 19) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form19.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Your complete written deal on property, debt, and support
Affidavit of Income and Expenses (Aff. 1) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit1.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Each spouse's income, job, and monthly budget
Affidavit of Property (Aff. 2) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit2.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Each spouse's list of assets and debts
Shared Parenting Plan (Form 20) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form20.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Needed only if you're asking for shared parenting

COMMON MISTAKES

What gets dissolution packets sent back

Blanks or vague terms in the separation agreement.

Missing parenting or health insurance affidavits when children are involved.

Support math that doesn't match the agreement.

Good to know in Clermont County

Affidavits filed in this court no longer need notarizing. An existing Juvenile Court support order transfers into your DR case. If the deal falls apart mid-case, Form 118 converts a dissolution to a divorce; Form 119 converts a divorce back.

DISSOLUTION · COST AND PROCESS

What it costs and what happens next.

These are deposits, not flat fees. The court adds up actual costs at the end. If costs run over the deposit, you pay the balance before the decree is filed. If they run under, you may get money back.

<p>NO MINOR CHILDREN</p> <p>\$300</p> <p>Deposit due at filing. Cash, check, or money order only.</p>	<p>WITH MINOR CHILDREN</p> <p>\$350</p> <p>Plus a parenting class for each parent: \$45–\$45.70, paid to the class provider.</p>	<p>CAN'T AFFORD IT?</p> <p>\$0*</p> <p>File Form 112, the poverty motion, with an affidavit. A Magistrate decides whether to waive the deposit.</p>
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About these fees

Court fees, forms, and procedures change. The fees on this page were verified on June 11, 2026 against the court's official fee schedule: domesticcourt.org/costs-and-filing-fees (<https://domesticcourt.org/costs-and-filing-fees/>). Always confirm current amounts with the Clermont County Clerk of Courts before you file.

<p>Do we both have to show up?</p>	<p>Yes. Ohio law requires both spouses at the hearing. If one of you won't appear, dissolution is the wrong path.</p>
<p>Can the court change our deal?</p>	<p>No. It approves or rejects. If the court won't approve it, or you stop agreeing, the case can convert to a divorce.</p>
<p>Do I need a lawyer?</p>	<p>No. But court staff can't give legal advice. And the court will hold you to what you signed — even if it's a bad deal for you.</p>

DISSOLUTION • PROCESS

Filing day to decree, step by step.

From filing to final hearing, Ohio law keeps dissolutions on a short clock. Here is the whole path — and the local steps that come first.

How to file

1. Complete the packet. Both spouses sign everything.
2. Take it, with the local checklist, to the Compliance Officer for the required pre-filing review.
3. File with the Clerk and pay the deposit. Cash, check, or money order only.
4. If a child under 16 is involved, finish the parenting class right away.
5. Both spouses attend the final hearing.

1

File

Your petition and agreement are filed together. The clock starts.

2

Wait 30–90 days

Ohio law sets the final hearing at least 30 and no more than 90 days after filing (R.C. 3105.64).

3

Final hearing

Usually brief — around 15 minutes. The court confirms the agreement is complete and voluntary, and that you both still want the dissolution.

4

Decree

Once signed and journalized, your marriage is over. The agreement is now a court order.

DIVORCE

Divorce: when there's no deal — or no response.

A divorce ends your marriage when you don't agree, or when one spouse won't take part. One spouse files. The other is served. The court supplies the structure: deadlines, temporary orders, discovery, and — if needed — trial. First question: are you starting the case, or did you just get served?

A

I need to start the case

You file a Complaint for Divorce. The complaint starts the case and tells the court what you want. The Clerk then serves your spouse by certified mail or sheriff. You provide the address, and you make sure service actually happens.

B

I was served papers

You have 28 days from the day you were served to file an Answer (Civ.R. 12). Served means formally handed or mailed the papers — not the day you first heard about the case. The Answer makes you a full part of the case. A Counterclaim (\$50 deposit) adds your own requests. With one on file, the case continues even if your spouse drops theirs.

IF YOU WERE SERVED

Don't wait for the hearing date to act.

Find the 28-day answer deadline on the papers. Is a request for temporary orders attached? Then you typically have only 14 days to respond with your own affidavit (Civ.R. 75(N)). Miss it, and the court can issue orders based on your spouse's paperwork alone. Save everything you were served with, including the envelope.

Feeling overwhelmed?

Being served — or deciding to file — is the hardest moment in this part. Not sure which path fits? The free 2-minute quiz at gavvl.com/find-my-service (<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>) will point you in the right direction.

ANSWER DEADLINE

28 days

FIRST HEARING

~45 days after service

COUNTERCLAIM DEPOSIT

\$50

OBJECTIONS WINDOW

14 days

DIVORCE · FORMS

The divorce paperwork, for both paths.

Ohio's standard forms plus local checklists — the court's own pages bundle everything by situation.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Divorce with minor children — packet https://domesticcourt.org/divorce-with-minor-children	DR Court website	Checklist and forms for filing with children
Divorce, no minor children — packet https://domesticcourt.org/divorce-with-no-minor-children	DR Court website	Checklist and forms for filing without children
Answer or Counterclaim — packet https://domesticcourt.org/divorce-answer-or-counterclaim	DR Court website	Everything for responding after you've been served
<p>⚠ Heads up: The 28-day clock runs from service — miss it, and the case can move on without you.</p>		
Complaint for Divorce (Forms 6 / 7) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form7.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Form 6 without children; Form 7 with children
Answer (Forms 10 / 11) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form11.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Form 10 without children; Form 11 with children
Counterclaim for Divorce (Form 8) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form8.pdf	Supreme Court of Ohio	Your own requests, filed with the Answer

COMMON MISTAKES

What slows divorce filings down

Bad or missing service. Give the Clerk a good address; no service within 6 months means dismissal (Local Rule DR 8).

Wrong county caption or missing affidavits. Use the local checklist.

Ignoring the automatic restraining order (next page).

Assuming a filed motion postpones a hearing — call the court to confirm.

WHILE THE CASE IS PENDING

Temporary orders: the rules until the case ends.

Divorce cases take time. Temporary orders set the rules for money, the house, and the children while the case is pending. They keep things stable. They do not control the final decision.

How they work in Clermont County

- Ask for them in your complaint, answer, or counterclaim, or by separate motion: [Supreme Court Affidavit 5](#) (<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit5.pdf>).
- File the [Notice of Perfection of Service \(Form 201\)](#) (<https://domesticcourt.org/media/Forms/201-NoticeofPerfectionofService.docx>) so the court knows the other side has the papers.
- No counter-affidavit within 14 days of service? The court can decide on the papers alone, with no live hearing (Civ.R. 75(N)).
- No temporary support is ordered while spouses still share a household. The court may divide the bills instead (Local Rule DR 19).
- Spouse gone 30 days or more? You can ask for exclusive use of the home by motion and affidavit (Local Rule DR 20).

AUTOMATIC PROTECTION

A restraining order starts the moment you file.

Every Clermont County divorce or legal separation triggers an automatic temporary restraining order (Local Rule DR 21, Appendix C). It bars both spouses from moving the children's home, harassment, running up debt in the other's name, selling property, changing insurance or retirement benefits, and shutting off utilities. It is standard — not a judgment about either spouse. Violating it backfires badly.

Respond fast

If your spouse asked for temporary orders, you typically have 14 days to file your own affidavit or formally ask for more time. Miss it, and the court can set support, parenting time, and who stays in the house based only on what your spouse filed.

DIVORCE · COST AND PROCESS

What divorce costs and how it unfolds.

The deposits below were checked against the court's fee schedule on June 11, 2026. The court applies them to actual costs as the case goes.

NO MINOR CHILDREN**\$325**

Also the deposit for legal separation or annulment without children.

WITH MINOR CHILDREN**\$400**

Also the deposit for legal separation or annulment with children.

SERVICE EXTRAS**\$50–\$550**

Counterclaim \$50 · out-of-county sheriff \$60 · publication \$550.

About these fees

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(<https://domesticcourt.org/costs-and-filing-fees/>). Always confirm current amounts with the Clermont County Clerk of Courts before you file.

If your spouse can't be found

You can ask to serve by publication or posting, with an affidavit — [Form 111](#)

(<https://domesticcourt.org/media/Forms/111-affidavitServicebyPublication.docx>). Publication carries a \$550 deposit. A divorce can finish without your spouse appearing — but you'll need a corroborating witness at the final hearing.

Legal separation and annulment

A legal separation runs on the same track and fees as divorce. The difference: the decree doesn't end the marriage. People choose it for religious or insurance reasons. An annulment treats the marriage as if it never happened. It fits only narrow situations and is rare. Clermont County publishes little on annulment, so expect the standard Ohio process — and confirm details with the Clerk.

DIVORCE · PROCESS

The shape of a divorce case.

Every contested case follows the same skeleton. Most settle before trial. The deadlines below come from the civil rules and Clermont County's local rules.

1

Complaint filed

You file and pay the deposit. The automatic restraining order takes effect.

2

Service

The Clerk serves your spouse by certified mail or sheriff. You confirm it worked.

3

Answer — 28 days

Your spouse answers and may counterclaim. Either side can ask for temporary orders.

4

Pretrial — about 45 days after service

A scheduling conference, not a trial. You leave with a pretrial order and deadlines, including money disclosures.

5

Settle or try the case

Most cases settle. If not, a Magistrate hears evidence and issues a written Decision.

6

Objections — 14 days

Either side may object to the Decision within 14 days. If no one objects, the court issues the Decree of Divorce.

Deadlines inside the case

Clermont County front-loads the money homework (Local Rule DR 12). A discovery conference must happen no later than 21 days before the first pretrial. Disclosures are due within 30 days after the answer: tax returns, pay records, account and debt statements, deeds, titles, retirement plans, and insurance. Start gathering documents the day the case begins.

How long does it take?

It depends on how much you fight — and the court won't let a case drift forever. If service isn't completed within 6 months, the case can be dismissed (Local Rule DR 8). Settling issues early, showing up prepared, and meeting the disclosure deadlines are the fastest ways through.

CUSTODY AND PARENTING TIME

Ohio doesn't have “full custody.” Learn the real words.

The court uses exact terms, so this guide does too. The right words keep you from asking for the wrong thing — or signing something you didn't mean.

THE TWO ARRANGEMENTS**Sole custody**

One parent is the legal custodian — the major decision-maker — and the residential parent. The other parent still gets parenting time. Sole custody does not erase the other parent.

THE TWO ARRANGEMENTS**Shared parenting**

Both parents share decisions under a written shared parenting plan. It does not always mean equal time — the plan sets the schedule. To ask for it, you **MUST** file a proposed plan. Asking alone is not enough.

KEY TERM**Residential parent**

Mostly paperwork: whose address is used for school, insurance, and similar needs. It is not the same thing as legal custody — don't blur the two.

KEY TERM**Parenting time**

The schedule — the modern Ohio term for “visitation.” It is separate from the custody type. Parents can have equal or unequal time in either setup. Child support is figured the same way in both.

LOCAL DEADLINE

Shared parenting plans are due 30 days before the final hearing.

In Clermont County, the motion and proposed shared parenting plan must be filed at least 30 days before the final hearing (Local Rule DR 22). Final decrees of shared parenting use [local Form 601](#)

(<https://domesticcourt.org/media/Forms/601-FinalDecreeofSharedParenting.docx>).

PARENTING TIME AND SEMINARS

The county's standard schedule — and the required class.

If parents can't agree, the Guideline Parenting Schedule (Local Rule DR 23, Appendix D) is the starting point — a floor for planning, not a weapon.

The DR guideline schedule, in brief

- Children under 16: a repeating two-week pattern. Week A, the non-residential parent has Wednesday 8 AM to Monday 8 AM. Week B, Wednesday 8 AM to Friday 8 AM.
- Age 16 and up: alternating weekends, Friday 6 PM to Monday morning. Courts expect flexing for work, driving, school, and friends.
- Holidays rotate by even and odd years.
- Each parent gets 3 extra weeks per year (up to 2 in a row) with 30 days' written notice.
- Priority order: holidays first, then extended time, then the weekly schedule.

The 75-mile rule

Clermont County parenting orders include moving rules. A residential parent may not move the children more than 75 miles away without a modified order (Local Rule DR 23). Moving first and asking later is a fast way to land in contempt.

Required parenting seminar

In any Clermont County divorce, dissolution, or legal separation with a child under 16, each parent must finish an approved seminar within 45 days after service (Local Rule DR 27). Two approved options:

FCS Successful Co-Parenting — online through OSU Extension, \$45 (no refunds).

Children in Between — online, take anytime, \$45.70.

Sign up through the court's parenting-seminar page: domesticcourt.org/parenting-seminars

(<https://domesticcourt.org/parenting-seminars/>)

Supervised time

Supervised parenting time means visits happen with a neutral adult or agency present. Courts use it to protect a child — usually as a bridge back to standard time, not an end point.

Married but not divorcing yet?

A spouse living separate and apart can file a Complaint for Custody (\$215 deposit) without filing for divorce.

Will the court interview my child?

Sometimes, in a recorded private interview with the Judge or Magistrate. Parents and attorneys are not in the room.

CHILD SUPPORT

Child support: how the number actually gets set.

Ohio uses an income-shares model. The math starts from both parents' incomes, who pays for health insurance, and work-related child care. It works the same in sole custody and shared parenting.

COMPLAINT DEPOSIT	MODIFY (POST-DECREE)	CSEA REVIEW	ENDS AT
\$215	\$165	Every 36 months	18 + HS, or 19

The basics

- Estimate your number first: gavvl.com/child-support-calculator (<https://gavvl.com/child-support-calculator>) walks you through Ohio's worksheet.
- 90 or more overnights a year triggers a 10% adjustment. Bigger changes are possible by approved agreement or where the law's factors support them.
- Support ends when the child turns 18 AND finishes high school — or at 19, whichever comes first. It can run longer by agreement or for a child with special needs.
- All payments go through Ohio Child Support Payment Central. Never hand cash to the other parent and call it support.

Clermont County specifics

- CSEA — Clermont Supports Kids: (513) 732-7248, toll-free (800) 571-0943. For non-payment, contact your caseworker.
- The local CSEA can't take in-person payments. Pay online at Ohio SMART e-Pay, by text, or via MoneyGram at CVS or Walmart.
- “No support” by agreement is allowed only if expenses are clearly listed and divided — and monthly payments still run through CSEA.
- Bring tax returns, W-2s, 1099s, pay stubs, child-care costs, and insurance costs to any support hearing.

Enforcement is real

Quitting a job or staying underpaid on purpose doesn't lower support. Courts can impute income you should be earning. Unpaid support can mean seized tax refunds, and contempt can carry jail time.

We agree on a lower amount. Done?	No. The court orders what's best for the child. It does not have to approve your number.
When can I ask for a change?	Any time things change in a big way, by motion. And every 36 months you can ask CSEA for a free review — no court filing needed.

SPOUSAL SUPPORT AND CHANGING ORDERS

Spousal support — and what “modification” really involves.

Life changes after a decree. What you can change — and how hard it is — depends on the kind of order you want to change.

Spousal support, briefly

Spousal support (the modern term for alimony) is money one spouse pays the other, during or after the case. The court weighs factors set by law: incomes, length of marriage, earning ability, and more. One trap to know now: a court can change spousal support later only if the decree or separation agreement says it keeps that power. If that power isn't reserved, the amount is locked — for better or worse.

Changing spousal support

If your decree reserved that power, file the Motion to Modify Spousal Support (local Form 305) with a \$165 deposit. The court's page bundles the checklist:

domesticcourt.org/modify-spousal-support

(<https://domesticcourt.org/modify-spousal-support>)

Changing parenting or support orders

Post-decree motions in Clermont County carry a \$165 deposit per motion. Different changes are different motions with different burdens:

Child support / medical: show changed circumstances. The first hearing is usually a pretrial, set at least 2 weeks out.

Parenting time: Motion to Modify Parenting Time — schedule changes only.

Custody itself: Motion to Modify Parenting Rights and Responsibilities — a higher bar than a schedule change. The court may order a parenting investigation (about 90–100 days, \$250) or appoint a GAL (45–60 days).

Owe court costs?

The Clerk will not accept a post-decree motion from a party who still owes costs on the case (Local Rule DR 3). Check your balance before you plan a filing.

Divorced somewhere else?

If your decree is from another county or state, Clermont County may not be able to change it until the order is registered here. See the out-of-state orders section two pages ahead.

WHEN ORDERS ARE IGNORED

Contempt: making a court order mean something.

Contempt is the tool when the other person won't follow the decree. Support goes unpaid. Parenting time is denied. Property never gets signed over. Before you file, run the triage questions.

Ask first

1. Does your decree require mediation before filing? Many do — read it.
2. Have you tried to fix it in writing? Texts and emails become your evidence.
3. Is it worth it? A \$165 deposit plus time and conflict should buy something that matters.

How it works

File the [Post-Decree Motion for Contempt and Affidavit \(local Form 302\)](https://domesticcourt.org/media/Forms/302-PostDecreeMotionforContemptandAffidavit.docx) with the \$165 deposit. If the court finds contempt, penalties can include jail, fines, attorney fees, and court costs. The court can also order the other side to pay back your deposit. Most often the court issues a purge order: specific steps the person can take to “purge” the contempt and avoid the penalty.

FACING A CONTEMPT CHARGE?

You may have a right to appointed counsel. Contempt can carry jail time. So Clermont County lets people who qualify financially ask for appointed counsel — [Motion, Form 114](https://domesticcourt.org/media/Forms/114-MotionforAppointedCounseltoDefendAgainstContemptAllegation.docx) (Local Rule DR 50). At any contempt pretrial, the person accused must appear in person.

Objections and appeals — not a do-over

Most hearings are decided by a Magistrate. You have 14 days to file objections (Form 203). Objections to fact findings need a transcript, filed within 30 days (Local Rule DR 39). Filings are due by 4:00 PM. An objection or an appeal reviews the record for error. It uses only the evidence from trial. It is not a new hearing with new evidence. Appeals go to the 12th District Court of Appeals (\$225 deposit) within 30 days of a final order (App.R. 4).

OBJECTIONS	TRANSCRIPT	APPEAL	APPEAL DEPOSIT
14 days	30 days	30 days	\$225

OUT-OF-STATE ORDERS

Orders from another state or county.

An out-of-state decree usually must be registered in Clermont County before this court can enforce or change it. Registration alone is cheap. Asking the court to act on it costs more.

Two different laws, two different forms

- Custody or parenting-time orders: UCCJEA, Form 307. Packet: domesticcourt.org/uccjea (<https://domesticcourt.org/uccjea>)
- Child-support orders: UIFSA, Form 308. Packet: domesticcourt.org/uifsa (<https://domesticcourt.org/uifsa>)
- UCCJEA registration covers custody and parenting time only — not support or property (Local Rule DR 42).

What it costs

\$50 to register a foreign decree. \$215 to register it with a motion to enforce or modify. Attach a certified copy of the newest order to your Parenting Proceeding Affidavit. A case from another Ohio county needs a certified transfer entry and the full original file (Local Rule DR 44).

PROPERTY AND DEBT

Equitable doesn't mean equal.

Ohio divides marital property equitably — fairly, which is usually close to equal but not always. What counts as marital turns on timing, not names.

Marital vs. separate

Property and debt acquired during the marriage is usually marital — no matter whose name is on it. Inheritances and gifts stay separate if you can trace them. Mixing them into joint accounts can change that.

Retirement is divisible

Retirement earned during the marriage is marital. Private plans divide by QDRO; certain Ohio public pensions use a DOPO. The county requires personal identifiers removed from the public copy (Local Rule DR 34).

Fault rarely moves money

Courts don't punish bad behavior with a bigger property award — unless it drained marital money or endangered the family. Ohio doesn't recognize common-law marriage. The marriage and separation dates control.

When to bring in a professional

A house means an appraisal. A business means a valuation. Spending a little on the number beats guessing wrong on the biggest asset you own.

MEDIATION, GALS, AND EVALUATIONS

The people the court can bring into your case.

Clermont County leans on a toolbox of neutrals to settle cases and protect children. Knowing who does what — and who pays — keeps these from being a surprise.

FREE AT THE COURT**Mediation**

A trained neutral helps you reach agreement on parenting or property. Sessions run about 2 hours. Most cases finish in 1 to 3 sessions. There is no charge for mediation at the court. Talks are confidential. Agreements bind only once signed and court-approved. Mediation is never used for protection-order terms, and domestic violence screening happens first.

\$1,500 DEPOSIT**Guardian ad litem (GAL)**

A GAL investigates the child's best interest — interviews, home visits, records — and reports about a week before trial. The GAL speaks for the child's best interest, not for either parent. Clermont County GALs bill \$125 per hour against a \$1,500 deposit paid by one or both parents. A GAL investigation typically runs 45–60 days.

\$250 FEE**Parenting investigation**

The court's own investigator interviews each parent alone at the courthouse (about 2 hours each), may interview the children, and reviews conduct, communication, and any criminal or CPS history. Parents complete a questionnaire (Form 606) first. Expect roughly 90–100 days. Refusing to take part is contempt.

ATTORNEYS REQUIRED**Early neutral evaluation**

A court-ordered, 3-hour session where evaluators give both sides a candid read on likely outcomes. Both parties must have attorneys. Each side submits a perspective brief 3 weeks ahead. What's said there is confidential and can't be used as evidence.

DR FORMS · STARTING A CASE

Every Domestic Relations form, in one place.

The court posts a complete packet — forms plus a checklist — for each kind of case. Start from the packet page that matches your situation, not from a single form.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
All forms, by number https://domesticcourt.org/organized-by-form-number	DR Court website	The court's full form library, listed by form number
All forms, by name https://domesticcourt.org/organized-by-form-name	DR Court website	The same library, listed alphabetically — with every filing checklist
Unsure what to file? https://domesticcourt.org/dissolution-divorce-and-post-decree-actions	DR Court website	The court's own guide to choosing between dissolution, divorce, and post-decree motions
Spouse's complaint for custody https://domesticcourt.org/complaint-for-custody/spouse-complaint	DR Court website	Custody without divorce, for spouses living separate and apart — \$215 deposit
Third-party complaint for custody https://domesticcourt.org/complaint-for-custody/third-party-complaint	DR Court website	Custody packet for a non-parent — \$215 deposit
Spouse's complaint for child or medical support https://domesticcourt.org/complaint-for-support/spouse-complaint	DR Court website	Support without divorce — \$215 deposit
Third-party complaint for support https://domesticcourt.org/complaint-for-support/third-party-complaint	DR Court website	Support packet for a non-parent caring for a child
Convert your case https://domesticcourt.org/convert-dissolution-to-divorce-with-minor-children	DR Court website	Dissolution to divorce, with children. Also: no children (https://domesticcourt.org/convert-dissolution-to-divorce-no-minor-children) · divorce to dissolution (https://domesticcourt.org/convert-divorce-to-dissolution-with-without-minor-children)

DR FORMS · AFTER THE DECREE

Post-decree motion packets, by situation.

Each packet page bundles the motion, the checklist, and the filing steps. Every post-decree motion carries a \$165 deposit — and the Clerk won't take one if you still owe costs on the case (Local Rule DR 3).

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Modify child support, medical, or tax exemption https://domesticcourt.org/modify-child-support-and-or-medical-insurance-costs	DR Court website	Checklist 6 packet — changed-circumstances motions
Modify spousal support https://domesticcourt.org/modify-spousal-support	DR Court website	Checklist 7 packet with local Form 305
Modify parenting time https://domesticcourt.org/modify-parenting-time	DR Court website	Checklist 9 packet — schedule changes only
Modify parenting rights / shared parenting https://domesticcourt.org/modify-parenting-rights-responsibilities-motion-for-and-to-terminate-shared-parenting	DR Court website	Checklist 10 packet — ask for, change, or end custody or shared parenting
Motion for contempt https://domesticcourt.org/motion-for-contempt	DR Court website	Checklist 8 packet with local Form 302
Miscellaneous motion https://domesticcourt.org/miscellaneous	DR Court website	Checklist 14 packet for anything without its own form (local Form 306)
Register an out-of-state custody order (UCCJEA) https://domesticcourt.org/uccjea	DR Court website	Checklist 12-A packet with Form 307
Register an out-of-state support order (UIFSA) https://domesticcourt.org/uifsa	DR Court website	Checklist 12-B packet with Form 308

DR FORMS · CHEAT SHEET

The individual forms this guide mentions.

Quick links to the forms named in Part 1. Affidavits filed in this court no longer need to be notarized.

FORM	WHAT IT'S FOR
SC Affidavit 3 — Parenting Proceeding Affidavit	Required in every case involving children (UCCJEA)
SC Affidavit 4 — Health Insurance Affidavit	Health coverage details, required with children
SC Form 21 — Parenting Plan	The plan for sole-custody cases (Form 20 is shared parenting)
Form 605 — Guideline Parenting Schedule	The county's standard schedule, ready to file
Form 601 — Final Decree of Shared Parenting	The local decree form for shared parenting
Form 626 — Child Support Worksheet Information	Local worksheet info — run the numbers with the official Ohio calculator
Form 111 — Service by Publication	When your spouse can't be found (\$550 deposit)
Form 112 — Poverty Motion	Ask to file without paying the deposit
Form 201 — Notice of Perfection of Service	Tells the court the other side has the papers
Form 203 — Objections to Magistrate's Decision	Due in 14 days — pair with Form 120, Request for Transcript
Form 205 — Motion for Continuance	Ask to move a hearing — also: Form 207, interpreter request
Form 114 — Appointed Counsel (contempt)	Ask for a lawyer when accused of contempt
Forms 801–803 — Relocation notices	In-county notice; also out of county and motion for hearing
Form 10.01-K — Modify or terminate a CPO	Change or end a protection order or consent agreement

PROTECTION ORDERS

Domestic violence civil protection orders (DVCPO).

If a family or household member or someone you dated has hurt you, threatened you, stalked you, or made you fear for your safety, you can ask the DR Court for a civil protection order. In danger right now? Call 911 first.

FILING FEE	FILING WINDOW	EX PARTE HEARING	FULL HEARING
\$0 — always	8:00 AM–2:30 PM	Same day	7–10 business days

How filing works here

1. File at the DR Court, Monday–Friday. The Clerk will not accept a CPO petition after 2:30 PM — arrive early.
2. There is never a filing fee for a protection order.
3. Give the Clerk an address where the other person can be served.
4. Wait for the same-day ex parte hearing. The Judge or Magistrate reads your petition and asks you to explain.
5. If an ex parte order issues, it shows your full hearing date (7–10 business days out) and the order's end date.

At the full hearing

If you don't appear, your petition may be dismissed. If the other person was served and doesn't appear, the hearing can go forward without them. If they weren't served, the hearing is continued and your ex parte order stays in effect. Cases end in a consent agreement or a Magistrate decision.

IF THE ORDER IS VIOLATED

A CPO violation is a crime. Call the police. You can also file a contempt motion in the DR Court. If your order is about to expire, file a motion to extend it before the end date — or file a new petition.

Petition packets

[The court's CPO page](#)

(<https://domesticcourt.org/civil-protection-order/>)

[Filing checklist](#)

[DV CPO packet — with children](#)

[DV CPO packet — without children](#)

[Dating violence CPO packet](#)

Verbal or money abuse alone, without threats or physical harm, generally doesn't qualify — but other help exists. See the next page.

REAL-LIFE ADVICE

The unwritten rules that protect your case — and you.

Judges see the same self-inflicted wounds in case after case. None of this is about being perfect. It's about not handing the other side easy evidence — and taking care of yourself.

Protect your case

- Don't post about the case — or your spouse — on social media. Assume the Magistrate will read it.
- Keep the children out of it: no messages passed through kids, no conflict at exchanges.
- Put things in writing and save the evidence — texts, emails, account statements.
- Don't pull your spouse off insurance, lock them out, or destroy property. It breaks the automatic restraining order and it always backfires.

Take care of yourself

- Kids' safety and well-being come first — and yours matters too.
- YWCA domestic violence support and shelter: ywcacincinnati.org.
- Ohio Domestic Violence Network: odvn.org.
- National DV Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 (call) or text START to 88788.
- Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati: (513) 241-9400.
- Free grief support for kids and adults: Fernside, fernside.org.

END OF PART ONE

Not sure which Part 1 path is yours?

The 2-minute Find My Service quiz asks about your situation and points you to the right path — and the right level of help, from a one-time document review to full representation. Free, no obligation:

gavvl.com/find-my-service (<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>) · or call (844) 694-2885.

PART TWO

Juvenile Court: parents who were never married.

If you and the other parent were never married, custody, parenting time, and paternity run through the Clermont County Juvenile Court — not Domestic Relations. Judge James A. Shriver presides. The court is in Suite 100, one floor from the DR Court.

THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD RULE IN THIS PART

Paternity and custody are two separate steps.

Until a court orders otherwise, an unmarried mother has sole custody by default (R.C. 3109.042). Paternity can be set by signed form, court-ordered DNA test, or court order. It makes a man the legal father and triggers child support. But it does NOT give him custody or parenting time. That takes a second, separate request to the Juvenile Court. Fathers who stop after step one have support orders and no schedule.

Local requirement before you file

For parentage cases, Clermont County makes you ask the CSEA first for an administrative decision. Attach it to your complaint or motion (Cle. Juv. R. 24). The CSEA — Clermont Supports Kids, (513) 732-7248 — can also help set paternity. An at-home DNA test won't work. Testing must be court-ordered, and the asking party fronts the cost.

What the Juvenile Court hears

- Paternity, custody, shared parenting, and visitation — one combined complaint form covers all four.
- Child support and medical support changes.
- Custody for grandparents and other non-parents, and grandparent visitation.
- Emergency custody.
- Juvenile civil protection orders.
- Contempt of juvenile-court orders.
- Cases involving Children's Services (abuse, neglect, dependency).

Asking for shared parenting?

Same rule as the DR Court: you must file a proposed shared parenting plan with your request. The Juvenile Court publishes its own plan form. Without a plan, the court can't consider it.

JUVENILE COURT • FILING

Forms, fees, and the age-based parenting schedule.

Juvenile forms are fillable PDFs. You can file at the window, by mail with a notarized signature and the fee enclosed, or through the court's e-filing portal.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
All Juvenile Court forms https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/juvenile-court/juvenile-forms	Juvenile Court website	One complaint covers paternity, custody, shared parenting, and visits. Also motions to change orders, contempt, moving notice, and more
Court costs and filing fees https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/cortcs23.pdf	Juvenile Court website	The official fee schedule — fees vary by filing type
<p>△ Heads up: Payment is due at filing, but the cashier can set up a payment plan. Unlike the DR Clerk, Juvenile takes credit and debit cards (with a small fee).</p>		
E-filing portal https://juvenile.clermontclerk.org/eservices/home.page.2	Online	File and track Juvenile Court cases electronically
Self-representation guides https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/	Juvenile Court website	Plain guides that walk you through it. They cover custody, visits, shared parenting, changes, and grandparent visits

Good to know in Clermont County

Juveniles must appear with a parent or guardian. Mediation is offered in custody and parenting cases (Rule 35). High-conflict cases can get a parenting coordinator (Rule 34). The window closes for lunch 11:45–12:45.

JUVENILE COURT · COMMON FORMS

Direct links to the forms most families need.

Fillable PDFs from the Juvenile Court's own site, with step-by-step self-rep guides.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint — paternity / custody / shared parenting / visitation https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/complaint-for-custody.pdf	Juvenile Court website	Opens most cases. Self-rep guides: custody · visitation · grandparent visitation
Shared Parenting Plan (Juvenile Court form) https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/shared-parenting-plan-form.pdf	Juvenile Court website	Required with any shared-parenting request. Guide: shared parenting
Motion to Modify Custody https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/motiontomodifycustody.pdf	Juvenile Court website	Change custody or shared parenting. Guide: modify custody
Motion for Change of Parenting Time https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/motion-to-modify-parenting-time-companionship-and-visitiation.pdf	Juvenile Court website	Schedule changes only
Motion for Change of Child Support / Medical / Tax https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/motion-for-change-of-child-support-medical-support-tax-exemption.pdf	Juvenile Court website	Support and medical-support changes
Motion for Contempt https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/motion-for-contempt.pdf	Juvenile Court website	When a Juvenile Court order is being ignored — also: juvenile protection order petition
Motion to Intervene packet https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/jc-packet-motion-to-intervene.pdf	Juvenile Court website	For relatives asking to join a Children's Services case
Caretaker Authorization Affidavit https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/caretakerauthorizationaffidavit.pdf	Juvenile Court website	For relatives raising a child — also: Power of Attorney · Notice of Intent to Relocate

JUVENILE COURT • SCHEDULES AND DEADLINES

The age-based schedules — and the clocks that differ.

The Juvenile Court runs its own parenting-time guidelines and its own deadlines. Don't assume the DR Court's rules carry over.

Parenting time is age-based here

The DR Court has one guideline. The Juvenile Court has seven, set by age (Appendices A–G). There is a holiday schedule plus schedules for birth–6 months, 6–12 months, 1–3 years, 3–6 years, 6–14 years, and 14–18 years. For ages 6–14, the standard is alternating weekends Friday 6 PM to Sunday 6 PM plus a Thursday overnight — [Appendix F](https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/appendix-f-parentingscheduleages6to14years.pdf) (<https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/media/Juvenile/Forms/appendix-f-parentingscheduleages6to14years.pdf>). All seven appendices are on the [Juvenile forms page](https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/juvenile-court/juvenile-forms) (<https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/juvenile-court/juvenile-forms>). The schedules are guides — not minimum rights.

Deadlines that differ from the DR Court

- Continuances: written motion filed 7 days before the hearing (Cle. Juv. R. 15).
- You must file money disclosures with your complaint or motion. The other side files 7 days before trial (Rule 17).
- Objections to a Magistrate's decision follow Juv.R. 40. Transcripts are due within 30 days (Rule 19).
- GAL reports are due 7 days before the final hearing (Rule 22).

EMERGENCIES

Emergency custody takes two filings.

An emergency motion needs its own written motion with an affidavit AND a main motion for custody or a change. The emergency ruling is temporary. The main case moves on its own track. The bar is high: immediate risk of harm to the child. If ex parte relief is granted, a hearing follows within 15 court business days (Cle. Juv. R. 37).

CHILDREN'S SERVICES CASES

If Children's Services is involved.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency cases are different from custody fights between parents. They move fast and the stakes are high. This guide can only orient you — these cases genuinely call for a lawyer.

The timeline is fast by design

- If a child is removed, a hearing happens the next court day or within 72 hours.
- Adjudication — the trial on the claims — within 60 days of the complaint.
- Disposition — what happens next for the child — within 90 days.
- Parents are parties and take part at every step. Show up to everything, even if you disagree with the case.

For relatives

Grandparents and other relatives can ask to join a Children's Services case. File a Motion to Intervene — the Juvenile Court publishes a packet. A relative caring for a child full-time has two more tools: a Caretaker Authorization Affidavit or a Power of Attorney. Both forms are on the Juvenile Court forms page.

Voluntary help — before court

The Juvenile Community Resource Center (CCJCRC) is at 2339 Clermont Center Drive, (513) 732-7697. It offers free help for youth and families. It is voluntary — never court-ordered. Programs include parenting classes, a group for grandparents raising kids, and teen life-skills classes. Reaching out is not an admission of anything.

Substance use in the case?

Clermont County runs a Family Dependency Treatment Court. It is a voluntary special docket for abuse, neglect, and dependency cases where a parent's substance use is a factor. It is built around treatment, regular check-ins, and testing. Ask the court or your attorney if it fits.

PART THREE

Probate Court: stepparent and kinship adoption.

Adoption creates a permanent legal parent-child bond. It also ends the old one on that side, for good. The Clermont County Probate Court, at 2379 Clermont Center Drive, handles it. The paperwork is exacting, and consent is everything.

QUESTION ONE, ALWAYS

Whose consent do you need?

Consent normally must come from the child's mother, the legal father, any registered putative father, and anyone with permanent custody — plus the child, if over twelve (R.C. 3107.06). A child over 12 signs in front of the court, unless the court finds consent isn't needed. Ohio law lists exceptions. The big one: a parent's consent is not needed if that parent went a full year before the petition with almost no contact with the child, or no support, without good cause (R.C. 3107.07). Contested-consent cases are hard — get legal advice before filing one.

The home study — don't fear it

A home study is always required, even for stepparents. An assessor runs background checks, visits your home, and gathers references. It is not a white-glove inspection. It confirms a safe, stable household. The court orders it after filing (local Form 118.33).

Notice

Everyone whose consent is needed must get formal notice of the hearing. So must anyone whose rights are affected, like a putative father who registered. Notice mistakes are the classic way adoptions get delayed or undone. If a birth parent's address is unknown, the court has a notice-by-publication process.

Custody and adoption are not the same

Custody decides who raises the child but leaves the legal parent-child tie intact. It can change later. Adoption ends the other parent's rights and duties permanently, including child support. And unmarried couples can't adopt together in Ohio.

What it costs

Probate deposits vary by case type. The court publishes its schedule at [the cost deposits page](https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/cost-deposits/) (<https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/cost-deposits/>). Confirm the current adoption deposit before filing.

ADOPTION · FORMS AND PROCESS

The adoption packet and what the hearing looks like.

Clermont County uses Ohio's standard probate adoption forms. The court's adoption forms page collects all of them.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Adoption forms (all) https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/forms/adoption-forms	Probate Court website	Every adoption form the court uses, in one place
Petition for Adoption of Minor (Form 18.0) https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/forms/adoption-forms	Probate Court website	Opens the case
Consent to Adoption (Form 18.3) https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/forms/adoption-forms	Probate Court website	One per consenting person; a child over 12 consents in the court's presence
Final Decree of Adoption (Forms 18.6 / 18.7) https://probatejuvenile.clermontcountyohio.gov/probate-court/forms/adoption-forms	Probate Court website	The order that makes it permanent

Bring to a stepparent-adoption consult

- The child's birth certificate.
- Your marriage certificate.
- Any custody, support, or paternity orders.
- What you know about the other parent's contact and support over the last year. Dates and details help.
- Any signed consents.

ADOPTION · THE HEARING

Five steps from petition to new birth certificate.

Most agreed stepparent adoptions follow the same short arc. Contested ones detour at step three — which is why consent questions come first.

1

File the petition

Include consents you already have and the child's birth certificate. Stepparents add their marriage certificate.

2

Court sets the hearing and review

The court orders the home study and sets the hearing. The hearing is usually at least 30 days after the child was placed in the home.

3

Notice goes out

Everyone entitled to notice is served. Objections or consent disputes are resolved first.

4

The hearing

Usually short — and in agreed cases, genuinely happy. The judge confirms the rules are met and that adoption serves the child's best interest.

5

After the decree

A new birth certificate issues. The adoption is permanent.

END OF THE COURT GUIDE

Adoption questions are best asked early.

Consent and notice mistakes are costly to undo. If anything about the other parent's rights is unclear, a low-cost consultation before you file can save months. Start at

gavvl.com/find-my-service

(<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>) or call (844) 694-2885.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help — if you want company on the road.

This guide gave you the map. Plenty of people use it and never hire anyone — that's the point. If you do want help, Gavvl is a modern Ohio family law firm. It serves all 88 counties, including Clermont. Skilled family-law attorneys work with simple tech: secure messaging, video meetings, and e-signatures.

OPTION ONE

Full representation

An attorney runs the whole case: strategy, every filing, every court date, talks, and trial if it comes to that. You have attorney access the whole way. Best for contested or complex cases, high conflict, and matters that may go to trial. Billed as a retainer plus hourly fees.

OPTION TWO

Limited-scope, flat-fee help

Hire the firm for just the part you need, at a flat fee per task. Examples: drafting and filing papers, one hearing, document review, or advice sessions. Best for agreed matters, simple changes, and tight budgets. An honest limit: it is NOT a fit for complex or high-conflict cases that need ongoing help. A case that starts limited-scope can usually move up to full representation if it turns contested.

Divorce and dissolution

Strategy and settlement terms. Complete filing packets. Temporary orders, talks, and final hearings.

Custody, parenting, and support

Parenting schedules and shared parenting plans. Support math and deviations. Changes to orders, and enforcement.

Protection and urgent matters

Civil protection orders, emergency custody, and fast-moving situations where deadlines are short.

Adoption

Stepparent and kinship adoption planning, consent review, packet preparation, and finalization.

WORKING WITH GAVVL

Ways to pay, and how to start.

Legal help shouldn't be a black box. Gavvl shows its service models and payment options up front. Exact amounts are quoted for your matter and set at enrollment.

Payment options

- Pay in full by card through Confido Legal.
- Affirm — monthly payments over 3, 6, or 12 months at 0–30% APR. The soft credit check doesn't affect your score.
- Flat-fee services: Klarna and PayPal pay-later, where available.
- Gavvl Direct — the in-house plan, no credit check. Start with 60% down and finance the rest, or finance the full fee and begin once 60% is paid in. Pay weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly at 19% annual interest, compounded monthly.
- Trust-account rules limit retainers to pay-in-full or Affirm. Flat-fee services have the most options.

Financing questions?

Email financing@gavvl.com or visit gavvlnow.com.

Three ways to start

1. Take the 2-minute Find My Service quiz: gavvl.com/find-my-service
(<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>)
2. Book a low-cost consultation at gavvl.com/start
(<https://gavvl.com/start>)
3. Call (844) 694-2885 or email support@gavvl.com.

Why people choose Gavvl

Clients rate the firm 4.8+ across 90+ verified Google reviews. Best Lawyers named Gavvl a “Firm to Watch” for 2026. And the founders have personally been through divorce and custody — they know the road from both sides. (Past results and ratings never guarantee an outcome — see the disclosures page.)

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Take the quiz, or just call.

Two minutes of questions, a clear answer on the right path, and pricing before you commit.

(844) 694-2885

gavvl.com/find-my-service

support@gavvl.com

1677 Old Henderson Road, Columbus, Ohio 43220

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

Please read: what this guide is, and isn't.

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Clermont County, but it can't account for the facts of your situation. 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 case, talk with a licensed Ohio attorney.

Accuracy and change

Court fees, forms, and steps change. The facts in this guide were checked as of June 11, 2026 against official court sources. These include the Clermont County Domestic Relations Court's posted fee schedule and local rules. Always confirm current fees and rules with the Clermont County Clerk of Courts before you file.

Results and recognition

Awards, ratings, and reviews reflect what other clients went through and what the rating groups think. They do not guarantee or predict the outcome of your case. Every case is different.

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