

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Franklin County

A practical map of divorce, dissolution, custody, support, protection orders, and adoption in Franklin County: which court hears your case, what forms you need, what it costs, and what happens next.

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- 01** Find the right court and the right path before you fill out a single form.

 - 02** See Franklin County's actual filing fees, form packets, and local rules — with live links to every form.

 - 03** Learn the local quirks that surprise people, like how temporary orders really work here.

 - 04** Know the deadlines that hurt people who miss them.

 - 05** Choose a next step that fits your situation and budget.

START HERE

Use this guide like a map, not a textbook.

Family-law problems get easier to handle when you can name the court, the path, the paperwork, and the next decision. This guide walks you through all four for Franklin County.

01

One building, three courts.

Domestic Relations and Juvenile cases are heard by one combined division at 373 South High Street. Part 1 covers Domestic Relations — divorce, dissolution, and protection orders. Part 2 covers Juvenile Court — custody and support for parents who never married. Part 3 covers adoption, heard by the separate Probate Court on the 22nd floor.

02

Lead with the local facts.

Fees, forms, and deadlines here are Franklin County's own, pulled from the court's local rules and official form pages. Where the county publishes no local procedure, we say so and describe Ohio's statewide process instead.

03

Every form is a live link.

Form names in the tables are clickable, and the full web address is printed underneath — so a printed copy of this guide still works. Tap the Contents link in any footer to jump back here.

IMPORTANT

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Franklin 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.

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YOUR COURTS

Your Franklin County courts at a glance.

Three courts handle family-law matters in Franklin County. All three sit at 373 South High Street in downtown Columbus.

COURT	WHERE & HOW TO REACH IT	WHAT IT HEARS
Domestic & Juvenile Division — Domestic Relations	373 S. High St., 4th Floor, Columbus 43215 · (614) 525-4410 · drj.fccourts.org	Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, protection orders
Domestic & Juvenile Division — Juvenile branch	373 S. High St., 4th Floor · (614) 525-4411 · drj.fccourts.org	Custody, parenting time, paternity, and support for unmarried parents
Probate Court	373 S. High St., 22nd Floor · (614) 525-3894 · probate.franklincountyohio.gov	Stepparent and kinship adoption, name changes, marriage licenses

FILING YOUR PAPERS

E-filing and paper

Attorneys must e-file at efiling.franklincountyohio.gov. If you represent yourself, you may file paper documents with the Clerk on the 4th floor. E-filing help: (614) 525-2600.

FREE HELP NEARBY

Self-Represented Resource Center

4th floor, (614) 525-7531, 9am–4pm weekdays. Court attorneys help with divorce and dissolution filings, affidavits, custody motions, and decrees — but not legal advice, protection orders, or e-filing.

FORMS & RESEARCH

County Law Library

369 S. High St., 10th Floor. Pick up court forms here if you don't need help completing them. Legal Aid of Southeast and Central Ohio serves qualifying residents.

The single most useful local fact

Franklin County staffs its Self-Represented Resource Center with real attorneys — free. Most counties have nothing like it. Filing without a lawyer? Call (614) 525-7531 before you start, not after the clerk rejects your packet.

PART ONE

Domestic Relations: ending a marriage in Franklin County.

If you are married, ending the marriage runs through the Domestic Relations branch. The first question is whether you and your spouse can sign a complete agreement — it decides which path you take.

OHIO RESIDENCY	COUNTY RESIDENCY	SEPARATION RULE	WHERE
6 months	90 days	30 days	373 S. High St.

QUICK PATHFINDER

Do you both agree on everything?

If yes, a dissolution may be possible — it is faster and costs less here. If no, divorce gives the court a process for deadlines, temporary orders, and trial. Agreement means signed terms on property, debt, support, and — if you have children — parenting and child support. Wanting it to be over is not the same as agreeing.

Before either path, check residency.

One spouse must have lived in Ohio at least 6 months and in Franklin County at least 90 days before filing. An Ohio driver's license or state ID is the usual proof. If your spouse lives elsewhere and files first, that court typically keeps the case — first to file usually wins.

The 30-day separation rule.

Under Local Rule 5, no dissolution, divorce, annulment, or legal separation can be heard until you and your spouse have lived separate and apart for at least 30 days. In a divorce, legal separation, or annulment a judge can waive this — in a dissolution, the rule stands.

Have children together?

Whichever path you choose, both parents must attend the county's seminar for separating parents. The deadline is 45 days before or after filing. Both must also file child support worksheets — even if you agree no support will be paid. Details are in the parenting and child support sections.

DISSOLUTION

Dissolution: ending a marriage you've already settled.

A dissolution is a way to end your marriage when you and your spouse already agree on everything. You file together, nobody is sued, and you walk away with a decree — usually in one to three months.

FILING FEE	FINAL HEARING	ATTENDANCE	COURT
\$225	30–90 days	Both spouses	DR, 4th Floor

This path may fit if...

- You both agree the marriage should end.
- You have signed terms on every asset and debt.
- With children: you agree on parenting and support, and both will complete the seminar.
- You can both attend a short final hearing.

NOT FOR YOU IF

- × One of you won't sign or can't be found — see Divorce.
- × You need court-ordered support or parenting rules while the case is pending — dissolution has no temporary orders.
- × You suspect hidden money — there is no discovery process.

Core filing	Petition, Separation Agreement, waivers, and proposed judgment entry
Money affidavits	Each spouse files an Income & Expenses affidavit and a Property affidavit
With children	Add health insurance and parenting affidavits, a parenting plan, and support worksheets
The hearing	Roughly 15 minutes — the court confirms you both still want the dissolution

Good to know in Franklin County

Local Rule 10 sets exact copy counts: triplicate with minor children, duplicate without. Clerks reject packets over copy counts surprisingly often.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution paperwork, with links.

Franklin County uses its own form set, available from the county law library.

Forms marked UODRF are Ohio's uniform statewide forms; the rest are Franklin County versions.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition, Agreement, Waivers & JE — Dissolution (with children) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8605533	County Law Library	The core packet: petition, separation agreement, waivers, and judgment entry
<p>△ Heads up: Local Rule 10: file in triplicate when minor children are involved.</p>		
Petition, Agreement, Waivers & JE — Dissolution (no children) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8602622	County Law Library	Same packet for couples without minor children
<p>△ Heads up: Local Rule 10: file in duplicate when there are no minor children.</p>		
Affidavit — Income & Expenses https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8605471	County Law Library	One per spouse; full financial picture
<p>△ Heads up: Local Rule 17: no blank spaces and no “N/A” — write “none” or “0”. Update it if anything big changes.</p>		
Affidavit — Property https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8605475	County Law Library	One per spouse; must match your Separation Agreement
Affidavit — Health Insurance https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8605469	County Law Library	Required when you have minor children
Affidavit — Parenting Proceeding https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8605473	County Law Library	One per parent; tells the court where the children have lived
Certificate of Assignment https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=47528986	County Law Library	Franklin County requires this with every new case
Confidential Disclosure of Personal Identifiers https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=16469663	County Law Library	Keeps Social Security and account numbers out of the public file

DISSOLUTION

Dissolution questions people actually ask.

The answers below reflect Franklin County's local rules and practice — not just Ohio law in general.

Common mistakes that stall dissolutions

- × Skipping the child support worksheet because you agreed to \$0 — Local Rule 21 requires the worksheet and deviation findings anyway.
- × Signing affidavits before you're in front of a notary.
- × A Property Affidavit that doesn't match the Separation Agreement.
- × Missing the parenting seminar — the court won't hold your final hearing until both parents have attended.

Do we both have to show up?	Yes. Both spouses must attend the final hearing or the dissolution cannot be granted.
How fast can this be done?	The hearing must happen between 30 and 90 days after filing. Most decrees are signed the day of the hearing.
What if we stop agreeing mid-case?	Either spouse can file a motion to convert the dissolution to a divorce — the county publishes a form for exactly this.
Can we appear by Zoom?	Only if the court approves a request. Unless specifically ordered, all parties must appear in person.

DIVORCE

Divorce: did you file, or were you served?

A divorce starts when one spouse files a complaint against the other. Where you stand in that sentence decides what you do next — so start with one question.

A

I need to start the process.

You file the Complaint for Divorce — it starts the case and tells the court what you're asking for. Franklin County publishes a complete complaint packet, with and without children. Forms and fees are on the next page.

THE ANSWER CLOCK

28 days from service. Not from when you heard about it.

Service is when the documents were formally delivered to you. Under Civil Rule 12, you have 28 days from service to file your Answer — miss it and the case can move forward without you.

B

I received divorce papers.

You file an Answer — and usually a Counterclaim. The answer makes you part of the case; the counterclaim adds your own requests, so the case continues even if your spouse drops theirs. Counterclaim fee: \$43.

If you were served, this week:

1. Find the date you were served; count 28 days.
2. Read everything — a temporary orders request may be inside, with its own deadline.
3. Save the envelope, summons, and every page.
4. Get your Answer (and Counterclaim) filed.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Answer — Complaint for Divorce with Children (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8143665	County Law Library	Your formal response when children are involved
Counterclaim — Divorce with Children (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8269054	County Law Library	Your own divorce claims; \$43 filing fee
Answer — Complaint for Divorce without Children (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=61899812	County Law Library	Your formal response, no minor children
Counterclaim — Divorce without Children (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8268466	County Law Library	Your own divorce claims; \$43 filing fee

DIVORCE

Filing the divorce: packets, fees, and the forms that ride along.

Franklin County bundles nearly everything into one packet. A few required items still travel separately — and two local rules trip up first-time filers.

FILING FEE	COUNTERCLAIM	SERVICE (IN COUNTY)	SERVICE (OUTSIDE)
\$275	\$43	\$30	\$75

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Divorce with Children Packet (all-in-one) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8269045	County Law Library	Complaint plus all four affidavits, Certificate of Assignment, and Confidential Disclosure
<p>⚠ Heads up: The Pre-Trial Statement is NOT in the packet — it's only needed if your case reaches that stage.</p>		
Divorce without Children Packet (all-in-one) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8268461	County Law Library	Complaint, financial affidavits, and the Mutual Restraining Order
Standard Mutual Temporary Restraining Order https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/administration/documents/local-rules/standard-mutual-temporary-restraining-order_edr3006-1-2017_v3.pdf	Court website	Standard orders against draining accounts, canceling insurance, or hiding assets
<p>⚠ Heads up: Local Rule 43: the filer signs and presents this order at filing, then serves a copy on the other spouse.</p>		
Request for Service (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8269140	County Law Library	Tells the Clerk how to deliver the papers

Court fees, forms, and procedures change. The information in this guide was verified as of May 30, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Franklin County Clerk of Courts before you file.

DIVORCE

Two local rules — and the order that binds you both.

Franklin County rejects more filings over formatting than over substance. Here is what the Clerk actually checks.

Two local rules that catch people

- × Local Rule 17: financial affidavits may not contain blanks or “N/A” — write “none” or “0”, and update them no later than 15 days before the final hearing.
- × Local Rule 11: every motion must follow the court's exact title format, and separation agreements go on separate paper. The Clerk may refuse non-conforming filings.

Mutual restraining orders are not an accusation.

These standard orders issue in every Franklin County divorce. They bind both spouses against bad financial behavior — draining accounts, canceling insurance, hiding assets. Disobeying one is contempt of court. They end when the court modifies them or the final decree is filed.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Waiver of Service of Summons https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=55753251	County Law Library	If your spouse will accept the papers voluntarily, this saves the service fee
Request for Fee Waiver / Affidavit of Indigency https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtopleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/affidavit-of-indigency_e5145-4800_02-2025.pdf	Court website	Asks the court to defer the filing fee

DIVORCE

What the divorce process looks like here.

Franklin County runs divorces on a published schedule. The clock starts when the Answer is filed — and the county's Local Rule 3 sets dates from there to trial.

IF YOUR CASE HEADS TO TRIAL

Franklin County requires trial notebooks.

Seven days before trial, both sides exchange notebooks, with two copies to the court. Inside: indexed exhibits, expert reports, witness lists, an asset-and-debt spreadsheet with your proposed split, and child support worksheets. Missing Rule 3 deadlines carries real penalties: fines start at \$250 and the court can exclude your evidence.

Good to know in Franklin County

A retired private judge can hear your case if both spouses agree — some couples use this to get faster, more private scheduling. The matter returns to the original judge when the private judge finishes.

1

Complaint filed and served

You file the packet and pay \$275. The Clerk serves your spouse, who has 28 days to answer.

2

Temporary orders, if requested

Rules for money, the house, and the children while the case is pending. Franklin County handles these differently than most counties — see the next page.

3

Disclosure and discovery

Witnesses are disclosed starting at day 45–60 after the Answer. Documents and information are exchanged on the Rule 3 schedule.

4

Settlement or trial

Most cases settle. If yours doesn't, trial is assigned around day 230 (no children) or day 290 (with children) after the Answer.

FEELING OVERWHELMED?

The contested-divorce stretch is the hard part.

Deadlines, disclosures, and trial prep are where most people decide they want company on the road. If you're not sure what kind of help fits, the 2-minute quiz at gavvl.com/find-my-service will tell you — no commitment, no pressure.

TEMPORARY ORDERS

Temporary orders work differently in Franklin County.

Temporary orders are the rules for money, the house, and the children while your divorce is pending. Franklin County handles them with an extra step — and it changes your timeline.

The 14-day rule still matters.
 If your spouse requests temporary orders, you typically have 14 days from service to file a counter affidavit (Civ.R. 75(N)) — or the court can act on their facts alone. Your affidavit is what you'll negotiate from at the conference.

Good to know in Franklin County
 Expect temporary orders to take longer here than in most Ohio counties — file early. Narrative affidavits are capped at 25 pages and can't be submitted as exhibits (Local Rule 13).

1 **File the Motion and Affidavit**
 Either side files the Motion and Affidavit for Temporary Orders Without Oral Hearing, with affidavits attached.

2 **Status conference, not a ruling**
 The court sets a conference where both sides try to agree on temporary orders.

3 **Supplemental affidavits**
 If you can't agree, the magistrate orders supplemental affidavits by a set date.

4 **Hearing only if still stuck**
 If there's still no agreement, the court holds a hearing and decides.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Motion & Affidavit for Temporary Orders Without Oral Hearing https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8269124	County Law Library	Requests (or counters) temporary support and parenting orders — with-children version
Motion & Affidavit for Temporary Orders (no children) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8268532	County Law Library	Same motion, no minor children

CHILDREN

Custody and parenting time: learn the words Ohio actually uses.

Ohio does not have “primary custody” or “joint custody.” The court will use different words — and using them correctly in your papers matters.

THE TWO ARRANGEMENTS

Sole custody or shared parenting

In sole custody, one parent is the legal custodian. In shared parenting, both parents share rights and responsibilities under a court-approved plan. Neither label decides how much time the children spend with each parent.

DECISION-MAKING

Legal custodian

The legal custodian makes the major decisions — education, healthcare, religion. The residential parent label is mostly administrative. It sets the address used for school enrollment. They are not the same thing.

THE SCHEDULE

Parenting time

Parenting time is the schedule (older orders say “visitation”). It is set separately from the custody label — parents can have equal or unequal time in either arrangement. Child support is calculated the same way in both.

Asking for shared parenting? You must file a plan.

The parent who asks for shared parenting must submit a proposed shared parenting plan — asking alone isn't enough. Franklin County accepts the uniform plan form, and Local Rule 21 requires both parents to file child support worksheets before any hearing.

Supervised time is the exception.

Standard parenting time is unsupervised. Supervised parenting time — visits with a third person present — may be appropriate where a child's safety is at issue. It usually requires evidence, not just worry.

CHILDREN

Franklin County's model parenting schedule.

Local Rule 27.1 gives separating parents four ready-made schedules. Courts treat them as a starting point — you can agree to something different.

Franklin's default schedule	Local Rule 27.1 (orders since Jan. 1, 2015) — a guideline, not a mandate; liberal parenting time is encouraged
Option A	Equal alternating weeks; Sunday 6pm exchanges; midweek evening for the other parent
Option B	Alternating weekends Fri 6pm–Mon 6pm, plus a split of the school week
Option C	Alternating weekends plus one weekday overnight
Option D	Alternating weekends Fri 6pm–Sun 6pm plus a Wednesday evening
Long distance	A separate schedule applies over 90 miles one way
Moving?	The schedule requires immediate notice — at least 60 days before a move

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Shared Parenting Plan (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8129953	County Law Library	The required proposed plan when either parent requests shared parenting
Model Parenting Time Schedule (Rule 27.1 / Juv. 22.1) https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtopleas/v1/court-services/documents/forms/model-dr-rule-27-1-juv-rule-22-1.pdf	Court website	Franklin County's default schedule, all four options, holidays, and long-distance terms

△ Heads up: Orders journalized before January 1, 2015 follow the older Rule 27 schedule — check which version your order uses.

CHILDREN

The parenting seminar and how child support really works.

Two requirements travel with every Franklin County case involving children: a parent seminar and child support worksheets. Skipping either one stalls your case.

REQUIRED CLASS

TAPP: “Putting the Children First”

Under Local Rule 26, all parents in a divorce, dissolution, or legal separation with minor children must attend the seminar for separating parents — within 45 days before or after filing (or service). Register at least one week ahead. Your case can't go to final hearing until you comply; the \$22 fee is built into your filing fee.

How support is calculated.

Ohio uses an income-shares model: both incomes, health insurance, and work-related childcare go into a worksheet. Run your numbers at ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov — it can't handle combined incomes under \$6,600 or over \$150,000.

The \$0 support trap.

Even if you agree no support should be paid, Local Rule 21 requires both parents to file the worksheet — and deviation findings. No exceptions.

Good to know in Franklin County

Some Franklin County judges routinely decline child support deviations — even agreed ones. If your agreement depends on a deviation, talk to someone who knows how your assigned judge handles them.

90+ overnights	Triggers a 10% adjustment; larger deviations need approved agreement or statutory factors
Cash medical support	Added at 150%+ of the federal poverty level — 5% of income or the USDA estimate, whichever is lower
Changing support later	After 36 months, request a CSEA administrative review; earlier requires a substantial change
Parenting-time mediation	Franklin County CSEA offers it: (614) 961-1832 (CSEA case required)

Support figures and rules above were verified May 30, 2026. The child support calculator and your CSEA have the current schedule amounts.

OTHER PATHS

Legal separation, annulment, and the divorce nobody answers.

Three less-common paths end up in the same courthouse. Each solves a specific problem — and one of them is widely misunderstood.

LEGAL SEPARATION**\$200**

With or without children, per Local Rule 2. Doesn't end the marriage.

ANNULMENT**\$200**

With or without children, per Local Rule 2. Treats the marriage as never valid.

DEFAULT DIVORCE**\$275**

The standard divorce fee — the path, not the price, is what differs.

Legal separation

Does everything a divorce does — divides property, sets support and parenting — but the marriage legally continues. Usually chosen for religious or health-insurance reasons. Franklin County publishes conversion motions if you later want a divorce instead.

Annulment

Applies in specific situations only — like fraud, bigamy, or underage marriage — and treats the marriage as if it never legally happened. It is rare, and proving grounds is harder than people expect. Most people who ask about annulment end up filing for divorce or dissolution.

“Uncontested” (default) divorce

In Ohio, an uncontested divorce is not a friendly one — that's a dissolution. Uncontested means a default: your spouse won't participate or can't be found. Service by posting or publication is required, and a witness must appear at the final hearing. The divorce can go through without your spouse — but if they appear before it's final, it's no longer uncontested.

Court fees, forms, and procedures change. The information in this guide was verified as of May 30, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Franklin County Clerk of Courts before you file.

OTHER PATHS

When your spouse won't respond or can't be found.

A default divorce can go through without your spouse — but Ohio makes you prove you tried to reach them first.

How default divorce works here.

When your spouse can't be located, Ohio allows service by publication. Under Local Rule 28, the Clerk posts notice at the Hall of Justice, the Auto Title Department branches, and the courthouse main lobby. Under Local Rule 6, only one corroborating witness — who may be a party — must have personal knowledge of the grounds.

A note on procedure

Franklin County publishes forms and fees for these paths but little step-by-step procedure. Beyond the local rules cited here, the process follows Ohio's statewide rules. Your court may handle details differently — the Clerk of Courts can tell you about local practice.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Affidavit — Service by Publication (Divorce) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8268430	County Law Library	Sworn statement that you can't locate your spouse despite reasonable efforts
Uncontested Divorce Hearing Notice https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtopleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/uncontested-divorce-hearing-notice_e_dr8350-08-2023_.pdf	Court website	Notice form used for the default hearing
Motion — Legal Separation Conversion to Divorce https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8269111	County Law Library	Converts a pending legal separation into a divorce (with-children version)

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing an order when life changes.

Decrees are not carved in stone. When circumstances change, you can ask the court — or sometimes the CSEA — to modify.

POST-DECREE MOTION FEE \$175	CUSTODY VS. SUPPORT Different paths	SUPPORT REVIEW 36 months	COURT Same case number
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Modifying: name what you're changing. Custody, parenting time, and support are changed by different motions, with different legal standards. Custody changes carry the heaviest burden. Support has a shortcut: after 36 months — or earlier with a substantial change — the CSEA can review the amount without a court motion.

A note on procedure
 Franklin County's verified facts here are the \$175 motion fee and the uniform motion forms. Beyond that, modification follows Ohio's statewide rules — confirm details with the Clerk of Courts before you file.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Motion — Change of Child Support, Medical Support, Tax Exemption (UODRF) <small>https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8143434</small>	County Law Library	The support-side modification motion
Motion — Change of Parenting Time (UODRF) <small>https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8150853</small>	County Law Library	The schedule-side modification motion
Motion — Modify Spousal Support <small>https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8143361</small>	County Law Library	Only works if your decree specifically kept modification open — check it first

Court fees, forms, and procedures change. The information in this guide was verified as of May 30, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Franklin County Clerk of Courts before you file.

AFTER THE DECREE

Contempt: when the other person won't follow the order.

Enforcement runs through a Motion for Contempt, filed in the same case. Franklin County magistrates hear these motions.

Contempt: ask three questions first.

1. Does your decree require mediation before filing? Many do.
2. Have you tried to fix it in writing? Courts notice.
3. Is it worth the cost? Be honest about what winning gets you.

What a contempt win looks like.

Courts usually impose a purge order: specific conditions the other person can meet to “purge” the contempt and avoid the penalty — pay the arrears, make up the parenting time. You may also recover attorney's fees. Jail is possible for continued defiance, but the goal is compliance, not punishment.

Filing fee	\$175 — the same post-judgment motion fee covers enforcement
The form	Ohio's uniform Motion for Contempt (Form 24/JF 3) with affidavit and service instructions
Standard of proof	Clear and convincing evidence that the order was violated
Who hears it	Franklin County magistrates hear contempt and discovery motions

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
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[Motion for Contempt \(Uniform Form 24 / JF 3\)](https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form24.pdf)
<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form24.pdf>

Supreme Court of Ohio

The statewide contempt motion, affidavit, and service instructions

⚠ Heads up: Franklin County publishes no local contempt form — the uniform form is the right one. Confirm filing details with the Clerk.

Court fees, forms, and procedures change. The information in this guide was verified as of May 30, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Franklin County Clerk of Courts before you file.

AFTER A DECISION

Objections and appeals are review for error — not a do-over.

Most Franklin County family hearings are decided by magistrates. If you disagree, you can object to the judge — but only using what was presented at the hearing. New evidence doesn't come in.

OBJECTION DEADLINE	TRANSCRIPT REQUEST	RESPONSE DUE	MEMO LIMIT
14 days	3 days	10 days	25 pages

THE HARD TRUTH

You can't fix a bad hearing afterward.

An objection or appeal can only use the information presented at the hearing — it is review for error, not a second chance with new evidence. The time to bring every document and witness is the first time. These deadlines are short and unforgiving.

The Franklin County mechanics (Local Rule 9).

- Object to a magistrate's decision within 14 days under Ohio Civil Rule 53, filed with the Clerk and served on the other side.
- If your objection attacks the facts, you must request the transcript — and pay the deposit — within 3 days of filing, or the objection can be dismissed.
- The other side has 10 days to respond.
- Motions to set aside a magistrate's order are due within 10 days of the order.
- Supporting memos: 12-point type, double-spaced, 25 pages maximum.

Appeals go up one more level.

After the judge rules on objections, a further appeal goes to the Tenth District Court of Appeals on its own deadlines. Appellate deadlines are jurisdictional — missing one usually ends the case. Get advice quickly if you're considering an appeal.

THE PROFESSIONALS

Mediators, guardians ad litem, and the court's own investigators.

Contested parenting cases rarely go straight to trial. Franklin County routes most of them through some mix of mediation, a guardian ad litem, or a court investigation first.

MEDIATION

Court mediation services

A neutral mediator helps you reach your own agreement. Franklin County's Mediation Services sits on the 3rd floor at 373 S. High St. — (614) 525-6640. Many disputes settle here, and your decree may require mediation before you can file contempt.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Guardian ad litem

A GAL is an attorney appointed to speak for the child's best interest — not for either parent. The minimum deposit here is \$800, billed in tenths of an hour. Accrued fees are due within 14 days of request, and unpaid fees can limit your evidence at trial. Reduced-fee appointments exist for parents who qualify.

COURT INVESTIGATIONS

Family Investigation Unit

In a contested custody case, either parent may ask for a social investigation. The court's own Family Investigation Unit handles it — after mediation has been addressed under Local Rule 7. No extra deposit is required.

Custody evaluations (Local Rule 45).

In high-conflict cases the court can appoint a licensed custody evaluator. The report goes to the court, attorneys, and GAL at least 30 days before the final status conference — and trial can't start until at least 60 days after that conference. Costs are allocated by ability to pay.

Parenting coordinators.

Some families keep returning to court over day-to-day disputes. For them, the court can appoint a parenting coordinator under Local Rule 42. This neutral resolves recurring schedule conflicts without a new motion each time.

Good to know in Franklin County

The court's Assignment Office — (614) 525-2620 — schedules nearly everything: pretrials, contested divorces, protection order hearings, and magistrate dockets. If you're confused about a hearing date, that's the call to make.

MONEY & PROPERTY

Dividing property: equitable does not mean equal.

Ohio courts divide marital property equitably — fairly under the circumstances. Often that's 50/50. Not always. What counts as marital is the question that decides most cases.

Marital vs. separate: it's about when, not whose name.
 Property acquired during the marriage is generally marital — no matter whose name is on the account or title. Inheritances and gifts are separate if you can trace them; mixing them into joint accounts can change that. The date of marriage controls, and the date of separation matters too.

ABOUT FAULT
 Courts don't punish bad spouses with property.
 It's wise to include no-fault grounds. The court won't award you more because your spouse behaved badly — but behavior that drained marital money or endangered the children can matter.

Partly marital, partly separate is normal.
 Retirement accounts and home equity are often both. Private plans divide by QDRO; Ohio public pensions (OPERS, STRS) use a Division of Property Order. These orders are technical — plan administrators reject imprecise ones.

When to bring in a professional.
 A house, a business, complex retirement, or disputed values are the triggers. An appraisal usually costs less than guessing wrong.

Bank accounts	Statements from the date of marriage forward tell the story — gather them early
The house	Equity can be partly separate (a down payment you brought in) and partly marital
Retirement	QDRO for private plans, DOPO for Ohio public pensions
Debts	Divided like assets — when incurred matters more than whose card it was
During the case	The mutual restraining orders apply — moving money or hiding assets is contempt

PROTECTION

Domestic violence protection orders: free, fast, and serious.

A civil protection order (CPO) is a court order that requires an abusive person to stay away from you. In Franklin County you file at the Domestic Relations court — and it never costs anything.

FILING FEE	CPO INTAKE HOURS	WHERE	FIRST STEP
\$0 — always	8:30am–2pm	373 S. High St.	Ex parte hearing

You can ask for a CPO if the person is...

- A family member by blood or marriage you've ever lived with
- Someone you live with now or in the past five years
- Your former spouse
- The other parent of your child — married or not
- You can also seek protection for any household member

What happens after you file.

1. A judge or magistrate holds an ex parte hearing — often the same day — and can issue immediate temporary protection.
2. The court schedules a full hearing where both sides are heard.
3. The final order can last up to five years and can protect your children too.

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER

Violating a protection order is a crime.

If the person violates the order, call 911 — police can arrest without you going back to court first. National Domestic Violence Hotline, any hour: (800) 799-7233.

CPO intake window	8:30am–2pm Mon–Fri — arrive early; the petition takes time
What to bring	Dates, photos, messages, police report numbers — specific incidents matter
Dating relationships	A separate dating-violence CPO form set — same process
Changing or ending an order	File the Motion to Modify or Terminate — never just agree informally

PROTECTION

The protection order paperwork.

Every form below is published by the court itself and costs nothing to file. CPO intake on the 4th floor can help you complete the petition.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
DV Protection Order Packet with Petition https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/dv_packet_3_11_25.pdf	Court website	The complete petition packet for domestic violence and dating violence CPOs
General Information About DV Protection Orders (10.01-A) https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/10.01-a_final-_4-15-21_.pdf	Court website	Plain-language overview before you file
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/parenting-proceeding-affidavit-final-_4-15-21__v2.pdf	Court website	Required if you ask the CPO to cover your children
Motion to Modify or Terminate a Protection Order https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/10.01k.pdf	Court website	The only proper way to change or end an existing order
Motion for Contempt of a Protection Order https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/10.01o.pdf	Court website	Civil enforcement when the order is violated

PROTECT YOURSELF

How to conduct yourself while your case is pending.

Family cases are won and lost on conduct as much as paperwork. These habits protect your case — and your kids.

ONLINE**Stay quiet on social media**

Don't post about the case, your spouse, or your new life. Screenshots end up as exhibits. There is no post worth explaining to a magistrate.

THE KIDS**Keep children out of it**

Not in the conflict, not in the logistics fights, not as messengers. Courts watch for this — and it hurts the parent who does it.

EVIDENCE**Put it in writing and save everything**

Texts, emails, posts, bank records. Written records settle he-said-she-said disputes. Back them up somewhere your spouse can't reach.

DON'T RETALIATE**No lockouts, no cancellations**

Don't remove your spouse from insurance, lock them out of the home, or destroy property. These moves violate the mutual restraining orders and backfire badly.

Your well-being counts too

Kids' safety and well-being come first — and yours matters. If you're struggling with safety, money, or stability, help exists. The protection order process on the previous page is free. Legal Aid of Southeast and Central Ohio serves qualifying residents. The National Domestic Violence Hotline answers any hour at (800) 799-7233.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE**Not sure which path fits? Two minutes will tell you.**

The Find My Service quiz at gavvl.com/find-my-service asks a few questions about your situation and points you to the right starting place — whether or not that involves hiring anyone. Prefer a person? (844) 694-2885.

PART TWO

Juvenile Court: parents who never married each other.

If you and your child's other parent never married, custody, parenting time, and support run through the Juvenile branch — same building, 4th floor, (614) 525-4411. Start with Ohio's most misunderstood two-step.

THE TWO-STEP EVERYONE GETS WRONG

Paternity does not come with parenting time.

Step one: establish paternity — by signed Acknowledgment, court-ordered DNA test (an at-home kit won't work), or court order. That triggers child support. But it does NOT give a father custody or a schedule. Step two: separately ask the juvenile court for custody and parenting time. Fathers who stop after step one have support obligations and no enforceable right to see their child.

Mothers start with sole custody.

An unmarried mother has sole custody of the child by default under Ohio law — no court order needed. That changes only when a court issues an order. The juvenile court or the CSEA can help establish paternity.

Pick the right packet.

Franklin County publishes two complaint packets, and the right one depends on the parents' history with each other — not the child.

Filing fee	\$175 for custody or support complaints under R.C. 2151.233
Never married	Use the Juvenile Custody Complaint Packet
Married before (or to each other now)	Use the Domestic Complaint Packet
Asking for shared parenting?	You must file a proposed plan — same rule as Domestic Relations
Parenting schedule	Juvenile Rule 22.1 mirrors the DR model schedule — same four options

JUVENILE COURT

Paternity and first-custody paperwork, with links.

Two complaint packets and the supporting forms. The right packet depends on the parents' history with each other — not the child.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Juvenile Custody Complaint Packet https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtopleas/v/2/court-services/documents/forms/clerk-juvenile-custody-packet_03-2025_1.pdf	Court website	For parents never married to each other
▲ Heads up: Married now or before? Use the Domestic Complaint Packet instead — filing the wrong packet starts you over.		
Domestic Complaint Packet https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtopleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/hb595-complaint-packet_03-04-25_v2.1.pdf	Court website	For parents currently or previously married to each other (R.C. 2151.233)
Complaint — Parentage, Allocation of Parental Rights (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8142948	County Law Library	Establishes paternity and asks for custody/parenting time in one filing
Motion — Order Genetic Tests https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8142984	County Law Library	Asks the court to order DNA testing when paternity is disputed
Paternity Fact Sheet https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtopleas/v/1/administration/documents/local-rules/pat-fact-sheet.pdf	Court website	The court's own plain-language explainer

JUVENILE COURT

Custody, parenting time, and the relatives raising kids.

Whether you're establishing a first order, changing an existing one, or you're a grandparent stepping in, the juvenile court has a published form for it.

First order vs. changing an order.
 Establishing custody for the first time and modifying an existing order are different motions with different burdens. Modification generally requires showing why the current order should change and why the change serves the child's best interest. Use the motion that matches your situation — the court's forms are specific.

Grandparents and non-parents: one form matters most.
 Anyone asking to become a child's legal custodian signs a Statement of Understanding — it confirms you understand what legal custody means and what it doesn't. Custody does not end the parents' rights; adoption does. If you're deciding between them, see Part 3.

A note on procedure
 Franklin County publishes its juvenile forms and the \$175 fee, but limited step-by-step procedure. Beyond what's cited here, cases follow Ohio's statewide juvenile rules — the Clerk can tell you about local practice.

Establish custody (parent)	Motion — Parent Custody, or the complaint packets on the previous page
Change custody	Motion — Change of Custody (UODRF)
Get a schedule	Motion — Parenting Time
Change a schedule	Motion — Change of Parenting Time (UODRF)
Grandparent custody	Motion — Grandparent Custody
Grandparent visits	Motion — Grandparent Visitation
Non-parent custody	Motion — Nonparent Custody
Answer a case	Answer — Juvenile Court, or Answer & Counterclaim

JUVENILE COURT

Custody and visitation motions, with links.

Each motion below matches one job from the previous page. File in the existing case number when you're changing an order.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Motion — Change of Parenting Time (UODRF) https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8150853	County Law Library	Changes an existing parenting time schedule
Motion — Change of Custody (UODRF)	County Law Library juvenile forms page (fclawlib.libguides.com)	Changes an existing custody order — find it on the library's juvenile forms list
Motion — Grandparent Visitation https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8150817	County Law Library	Court-ordered time for a grandparent
Motion — Nonparent Visitation https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=15665945	County Law Library	Companionship time for other caregivers
Answer & Counterclaim — Juvenile https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8150779	County Law Library	Your response plus your own requests when you've been served

All juvenile forms: fclawlib.libguides.com (County Law Library) and drj.fccourts.org/Court-Services/Forms. Fee facts verified May 30, 2026.

JUVENILE COURT

Emergencies, out-of-state orders, and when the county steps in.

Three situations with their own rules: a child in immediate danger, an order from another state, and cases Children's Services brings.

EMERGENCY FILING FEE	FILINGS REQUIRED	REVIEW HEARING	REGISTRATION
\$30	Two	Within 45 days	UCCJEA / UIFSA

Emergency custody: the bar is high on purpose.

Franklin County strongly discourages ex parte custody motions and grants them only on sworn testimony in open court that a child faces irreparable harm — physical abuse, bodily injury, medical neglect, or exposure to domestic violence. It takes two filings: the emergency motion AND an underlying custody motion or complaint. The \$30 fee cannot be waived up front. If granted, a review hearing follows within 45 days.

Out-of-state orders: register before you enforce.

An order from another state must be registered in Ohio before this court can enforce or modify it. Custody orders register under the UCCJEA; support orders under UIFSA. Franklin County publishes the petitions and the notices the other side receives.

When Children's Services is involved.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency cases are different: the county brings them, the timelines are strict, and parents who qualify may receive appointed counsel — call (614) 525-3248. If you've received notice of a CPS case, treat every date on it as unmissable and get advice early.

What does NOT count as an emergency

School enrollment problems. Needing a first custody order. Missed visits. A child not returned after parenting time. Non-emergency medical decisions. Filing an emergency motion for these can get it summarily denied — and false statements bring sanctions.

JUVENILE COURT

Emergency and registration paperwork, with links.

Two of these forms aren't posted online — the County Law Library's juvenile forms page has them in person or by request.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Motion — Emergency Custody	County Law Library juvenile forms page (fclawlib.libguides.com)	The ex parte motion — pair it with an underlying custody motion or complaint
Motion — Emergency Termination of Visitation https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=8150792	County Law Library	Asks the court to stop parenting time immediately when a child is at risk
Petition — Register Order From Another State or Country	County Law Library juvenile forms page (fclawlib.libguides.com)	Registers an out-of-state custody order in Ohio (UCCJEA)
Notice to Nonregistering Party (UCCJEA — custody) https://drj.fccourts.org/files/assets/courtofpleas/v/1/court-services/documents/forms/notice-to-nonregistering-party_eju7146-uccjea-1-2016_.pdf	Court website	The notice the other side receives when a custody order is registered
Petition — Register Support Order From Another State https://fclawlib.libguides.com/ld.php?content_id=76345111	County Law Library	Brings an out-of-state support order under Ohio enforcement (UIFSA)

FEELING OVERWHELMED?

Juvenile cases are document-heavy even when they sound simple.

Bring every prior order, agency letter, and school or medical record to your first conversation — with the court's Self-Represented Resource Center, legal aid, or an attorney. If you're not sure what level of help you need, the 2-minute quiz at gavvl.com/find-my-service is a place to start.

PART THREE

Adoption: joyful outcome, exacting paperwork.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions are heard by the Probate Court — a separate court on the 22nd floor of the same building. Adoption permanently changes who a child's legal parents are, so the court checks everything.

The consent question comes first.

A biological parent must normally consent before their child can be adopted. Ohio law recognizes specific exceptions. Whether one applies is a legal judgment with permanent consequences. If consent is missing or contested, get advice before filing, not after.

Custody and adoption are not the same thing.

Adoption permanently ends the other parent's legal relationship with the child. Legal custody does not — parents keep residual rights. Unmarried people cannot adopt together in Ohio. If permanence isn't the goal, the juvenile custody path in Part 2 may fit better.

Expect a home study — it's standard, not scary.

Every adoption includes one: background checks, a home visit, and references — confirming a safe, stable home. Older children may need to consent to their own adoption.

Court	Franklin County Probate Court, 373 S. High St., 22nd Floor
Contact	(614) 525-3894 · probate@franklincountyohio.gov
Adoption forms	probate.franklincountyohio.gov/Forms/Adoption-Forms
Court costs & e-filing	Published at probate.franklincountyohio.gov

A note on procedure

This overview follows Ohio's statewide adoption framework; verified county data covers contacts only. Confirm forms, costs, and hearing practice with the Probate Court.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Adoption questions deserve a real conversation.

Consent, notice, and home-study questions are where a short consultation saves months. Take the 2-minute quiz at 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 a fine outcome. If you do want help, here is honestly what working with the firm looks like.

FULL REPRESENTATION

An attorney manages the whole case.

From first consultation through final orders: strategy, every filing, every appearance, negotiation, and trial if it comes to that. Best for contested or complex cases and high-conflict situations. Billed as a retainer plus hourly fees.

LIMITED-SCOPE (FLAT FEE)

Hire a lawyer for the part you actually need.

Specific tasks at a flat fee per service: drafting and filing documents, one court appearance, advice sessions, or document review. Best for uncontested matters, simple changes, and tight budgets. Honest limit: NOT recommended for complex or high-conflict cases that need ongoing advocacy. It can usually move to full representation if things turn contested.

Divorce & dissolution

Strategy, settlement terms, filings, temporary orders, and final hearings.

Custody & parenting

Parenting schedules, shared parenting plans, modifications, and hearing preparation.

Support

Child and spousal support calculations, deviations, modifications, and enforcement.

Adoption & protection

Stepparent and kinship adoption, consent review, and protection order matters.

A modern Ohio firm

Gavvl Law serves all 88 Ohio counties. Its focus is the Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Cleveland metro areas. Experienced family-law attorneys work with secure messaging, video consultations, and electronic signatures. The firm was co-founded by Managing Partners Stephanie Green and Elizabeth Warren — attorneys who have personally navigated divorce and custody.

PART FOUR

Ways to pay, and how to start.

Legal help shouldn't require a pile of cash up front.

Full representation (retainer + hourly)

- Pay in full by card through Confido Legal.
- Affirm financing — monthly payments, soft credit check.

Limited-scope flat-fee services — the widest range

- Pay in full — Visa, Mastercard, AmEx, Discover.
- Affirm — 0–30% APR over 3, 6, or 12 months.
- Klarna or PayPal — interest-free Pay in 4, or longer monthly plans.
- Gavvl Direct — in-house, no credit check: 60% down, the rest financed at 19% annual interest compounded monthly.
- Exact amounts are calculated at enrollment. Questions: financing@gavvl.com.

Why people trust the firm.

A 4.8+ average rating across 90+ verified Google reviews, a Best Lawyers “Firm to Watch” for 2026, and more than 50 years of combined family-law experience. Awards and reviews reflect other clients' experiences — not a guarantee or prediction of your outcome.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Talk it through with someone who does this every day.

Whether you need one document reviewed or a full case handled, tell us what's going on and we'll tell you honestly what level of help fits.

(844) 694-2885

support@gavvl.com

gavvl.com/find-my-service

1677 Old Henderson Road, Columbus, Ohio 43220

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

The fine print that protects you.

Read this page before relying on anything in this guide.

Information, not legal advice

This guide is information, not legal advice. It explains how things generally work in Franklin 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 procedures change. The information in this guide was verified as of May 30, 2026 from official court sources — the Franklin County Domestic & Juvenile Division's local rules and form pages, the county law library, and the Supreme Court of Ohio. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Franklin County Clerk of Courts before you file.

Results and recognition

Awards, ratings, and reviews mentioned in this guide reflect the experiences of other clients and the opinions of the rating organizations. They are not a guarantee or prediction of the outcome of your case. Every case is different.

Who is responsible for this guide

This guide is attorney advertising material published by Gavvl Law LLC, 1677 Old Henderson Road, Columbus, Ohio 43220. Responsible attorney: Stephanie Green, Esq., Managing Partner. Gavvl Law attorneys are licensed to practice law in Ohio. This guide describes Ohio law and Franklin County procedure only. Privacy policy: gavvl.com/privacy-policy.

Free and low-cost local help

Self-Represented Resource Center: (614) 525-7531. Franklin County Law Library: 369 S. High St., 10th Floor. Legal Aid of Southeast and Central Ohio and the Columbus Metropolitan Library's free legal clinics serve qualifying residents. For domestic violence support any hour: (800) 799-7233.