

## PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

# Family Law in Fulton County

A plain-English map to family court in Fulton County: which court to use, what to file, what it costs, and where to get help when you need it.

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- 01** Find the right court before you fill out a single form — Fulton’s family-law courts share one Wauseon courthouse.

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  - 02** Tell a dissolution apart from a divorce, and married-parent custody apart from juvenile-court custody.

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  - 03** See the forms, fees, deadlines, and local steps that most often slow Fulton County filings down.

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  - 04** Pick a next step that fits your situation, your budget, and how much help you actually want.

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## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

# Start with the court, then the path, then the paperwork.

Most family-law problems get simpler once you can name three things: which court handles your issue, which path fits your situation, and what you need to file. This guide is built around those questions. Here is how Fulton County splits the work.

## MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED

## General & DR Division

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, spousal support, and the property, support, and parenting issues inside those cases — plus civil protection orders. Heard by Judge Scott Haselman. You file with the Clerk of Courts.

## PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

## Juvenile Division

Parentage, custody, parenting time, and child support when the parents were never married to each other, plus changes to those orders. Part of Fulton's combined Juvenile/Probate Court.

## ADOPTION

## Probate Division

Stepparent and kinship adoption, name changes, and marriage licenses. Shares the same office as the Juvenile Division. Adoption permanently changes a child's legal parents.

## READ THIS FIRST

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Fulton 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.

## YOUR COURTS AT A GLANCE

# Two courts, one courthouse in Wauseon.

Fulton County's family-law courts all sit in the Fulton County Courthouse, 210 S. Fulton Street, Wauseon, OH 43567. Court hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (the Juvenile/Probate office closes 12:00–1:00).

COURT / OFFICE	WHO & PHONE	ONLINE
General & Domestic Relations Division (divorce, dissolution, support, protection orders)	Judge Scott Haselman · (419) 337-9260	fultoncountyoh.com
Juvenile / Probate Court (unmarried-parent custody & support, adoption) — combined office	(419) 337-9242	fultoncountyoh.com
Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA)	Fulton County Job & Family Services · (419) 337-0010	fultoncountyoh.com
Children Services (abuse / neglect reports)	(419) 337-0010, Option 3 then 2 · after hours Sheriff (419) 335-4010 · statewide (800) 344-3575	fultoncountyoh.com
Protection-order help (The Center for Child & Family Advocacy)	(419) 335-4255	theccfa.org

### The one local thing to know first

Family law in Fulton County is split between two courts in the same building: Judge Haselman's General & Domestic Relations Division (divorce, dissolution, protection orders) and the combined Juvenile/Probate Court (unmarried-parent custody, support, and adoption). Fulton has no full e-filing portal — you file in person or by mail, though you can pay court fees online and the Juvenile Division accepts some fax filings. Look up case records at [fultoncountyoh.com/231](https://fultoncountyoh.com/231).

## PART ONE

# Domestic Relations: divorce, dissolution & married-parent cases.

If you are married, ending the marriage runs through the General & Domestic Relations Division of Common Pleas, where Judge Scott Haselman hears the case. The first question is usually whether you and your spouse agree on everything.

## QUICK PATHFINDER

## Do you both agree on every term?

If yes, a dissolution may fit — you file together and ask the court to approve your signed agreement. If no, or if you need the case started before you negotiate, a divorce is the path that gives you deadlines, temporary orders, and a judge to decide what you can't.

## IN THIS PART

- Dissolution (you agree) and divorce (you don't)
- Custody, parenting time, and child support
- Dividing property and spousal support
- Temporary orders and restraining orders
- Changing or enforcing an order; legal separation, annulment
- Protection orders and staying safe

PATH A · AGREEMENT

# Dissolution: ending a marriage you both agree on.

A dissolution is a no-fault way to end a marriage when you and your spouse agree on everything before you file — property, debts, spousal support, and (if you have children) custody, parenting time, and child support. You file together and both attend a short final hearing. A dissolution is not the same as an uncontested divorce.

COURT	FILING DEPOSIT	SERVICE	FINAL HEARING
Judge Haselman	\$325–400	Usually waived	30–90 days

**This path may fit if...**

- You and your spouse agree the marriage should end.
- You agree on property, debt, support, and (with kids) parenting and child support.
- Both of you can sign the agreement and attend the final hearing.

**Watch the agreement, not just the forms.**  
 A clean-looking packet can still cause problems later if retirement, taxes, the house, debt, insurance, or parenting terms are vague. The court can approve terms that are clear enough to enforce even when they are not good terms for you.

Core filing	Petition for Dissolution (SF 17)
Agreement	Separation Agreement (SF 19), signed by both
If minor children	Parenting plan, child-support worksheet, health-insurance details
Final step	A short hearing (about 15 minutes) where both spouses confirm the agreement

**FULTON NOTE**  
**Both of you must show up.**  
 A dissolution is only valid if both spouses attend the final hearing and still want to dissolve the marriage. With minor children, both parents must also complete Fulton’s mandatory parenting class within 75 days of filing.

DISSOLUTION · PAPERWORK

# What you file, what it costs, and what happens next.

Fulton County stopped issuing paper forms in 2013 and uses the Ohio Supreme Court standardized dissolution forms. File everything with the Clerk of Courts; Judge Haselman hears the case.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form17.pdf">Petition for Dissolution (SF 17)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form17.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form17.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Starts the joint case and waives formal service.
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form19.pdf">Separation Agreement (SF 19)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form19.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form19.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Your signed deal on property, debt, and support.
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form20.pdf">Shared Parenting Plan / Parenting Plan (SF 20 / SF 21)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form20.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form20.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Your parenting plan, if you have minor children.

⚠ Heads up: Both parties also file the DR-1 (Income & Expenses) and DR-2 (Property) affidavits. With minor children, add the DR-3 (Parenting Proceeding) and DR-4 (Health Insurance) affidavits, a child-support worksheet, and a Title IV-D application — and both parents must complete the mandatory parenting class within 75 days.

### How filing works

1. Reach full agreement, then prepare your Separation Agreement (and parenting plan, if you have kids).
2. File the petition, agreement, and DR-1/DR-2 affidavits, and pay the deposit (\$325, or \$400 with children). Add the IV-D application, worksheet, and DR-3/DR-4 if you have minor children.
3. Finish the parenting class within 75 days, then attend the final hearing 30 to 90 days after filing — both of you — and confirm the agreement.

Deposit (no children)	\$325
Deposit (with children)	\$400
Can't afford it?	Affidavit of Indigency
Paid to	Fulton County Clerk (pay online available)

## PATH B · DISAGREEMENT

# Divorce: when you don't agree, or need the court to act.

A divorce ends a marriage through a case one spouse files against the other. It doesn't have to mean a trial — most settle. Your first question: are you starting the case, or were you served?

01

## You are starting the case

You file a Complaint for Divorce with the Clerk of Courts. With children, use Form 7; without, Form 6. The complaint opens the case and asks the court to have your spouse served.

02

## You were served papers

You file an Answer within 28 days, and usually a Counterclaim so you can ask for your own relief. Do not wait for the hearing date — missing the answer deadline can cost you.

### USE DIVORCE WHEN

You need a deadline, a temporary order, or a judge's decision.

Often the necessary path when a spouse won't sign, money is unclear, or parenting time is disputed.

### UNCONTESTED ≠ DISSOLUTION

#### What "uncontested" means in Ohio

An uncontested (default) divorce is a regular divorce the court grants on your evidence when your spouse won't take part or can't be found (you serve by publication). It is not a dissolution, which needs full agreement.

1

## Complaint filed

One spouse files; the clerk issues service by certified mail, sheriff, or publication. On filing, the court issues a mutual injunction (Court Order No. 1).

2

## Service & answer

The other spouse is served and has 28 days to answer and counterclaim.

3

## Temporary orders

Either side can ask Judge Haselman for temporary parenting time, support, or use of the home.

4

## Settlement or decision

Many cases settle once documents are exchanged. If not, the court hears the issues and the judge signs the decree.

## DIVORCE · PAPERWORK &amp; DEADLINES

# Ohio standardized forms, filed with the Clerk.

Fulton uses the Ohio Uniform divorce forms (it stopped issuing paper forms in 2013). File everything with the Clerk of Courts.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Complaint for Divorce, with / without children (SF 7 / SF 6)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form7.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form7.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Starts your divorce case.
<a href="#">Answer / Counterclaim with children (SF 11 / SF 9)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form11.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form11.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Your response and your own requests if you were served.
<a href="#">Parenting Proceeding Affidavit (DR-3 / Affidavit 3)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit3.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit3.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Required when minor children are involved.

**DEPOSIT · WITH CHILDREN****\$400**

Divorce with minor children.

**DEPOSIT · NO CHILDREN****\$325**

Also a cross-claim/counterclaim.

**CAN'T AFFORD IT?****\$0**

Affidavit of Indigency available.

**COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID****What sends Fulton filings back**

- Signing forms before you reach the notary.
- Forgetting the DR-3 / DR-4 affidavits, the IV-D application, or the worksheet when you have kids.
- Missing the parenting class — due within 75 days.

**DEADLINES THAT MATTER****The clocks in a Fulton divorce**

28 days to file your Answer after service (Civ.R. 12). The mandatory parenting class is due within 75 days of filing. If the other side gets an ex parte order, you can request a hearing, set within about 10 days.

## CUSTODY &amp; PARENTING TIME

# Learn the words Ohio actually uses.

Ohio does not use “joint custody,” “sole custody,” or “primary custody.” Learning the real terms matters, because the court and your paperwork will use them.

**TWO ARRANGEMENTS****Shared parenting or one residential parent**

The court either adopts shared parenting under a written plan, or names one parent the residential parent and legal custodian. Both parents can have a lot of time in either setup.

**DECISIONS VS. ADDRESS****Legal custody vs. residential parent**

Legal custody is the authority to make major decisions. The residential parent is mostly the address used for school and similar purposes. They are not the same thing.

**THE SCHEDULE****Parenting time is separate**

Parenting time is the schedule. It is set on the child’s best interest and is not decided by the custody label — parents can share time equally or unequally in either arrangement.

**FULTON SPECIFICS****Fulton publishes its parenting-time schedules.**

Unless the court orders otherwise, parenting time follows Fulton’s published parenting-time schedules. You can review them at [fultoncountyoh.com/233](http://fultoncountyoh.com/233). The court can set a different schedule on the child’s best interest.

**PARENTING CLASS****Mandatory — within 75 days**

In any case allocating parental rights, both parents must complete Fulton’s parenting program within 75 days of filing (an online option is at [assistingourkids.com](http://assistingourkids.com)). Cases with children ages 5–17 also include the “What About Me” program. Missing it can cost you the allocation.

**IF YOU ASK FOR SHARED PARENTING****You must file a plan**

Asking for shared parenting is not enough on its own. The parent who wants it must submit a proposed shared parenting plan, or the court can’t consider it.

CHILD SUPPORT

# How the number is set, paid, and changed.

Ohio uses an income-shares model: support is calculated from both parents' income, the cost of the child's health insurance, and work-related childcare. It is figured the same way whether you have shared parenting or one residential parent.

### What drives the number

- Both parents' gross income (the court can impute income to a parent who is voluntarily unemployed or underemployed).
- The cost of the child's health insurance.
- Work-related childcare costs.
- Parenting time: 90 or more overnights a year usually triggers a 10% adjustment.

### ESTIMATE IT

Run your own numbers with Gavvl's Ohio child support calculator:

[gavvl.com/child-support-calculator](https://gavvl.com/child-support-calculator)

(<https://gavvl.com/child-support-calculator>)

Who administers it	Fulton County CSEA (JFS), (419) 337-0010
How it's paid	Through Ohio Child Support Payment Central (CSPC)
When it can change	A substantial change — often a 10%+ change in the guideline amount — or 36 months after the order (administrative review)
When it ends	When the child turns 18 and graduates high school, or turns 19, whichever comes first (longer by agreement or for a child with special needs)

### GOOD TO KNOW

**Agreeing to less doesn't bind the court.**

If both parents agree to a lower amount, the court still orders what it finds is in the child's best interest. It does not have to approve a lower number.

## DIVIDING PROPERTY &amp; SPOUSAL SUPPORT

# Equitable does not mean equal.

Ohio courts divide marital property and debt fairly — which is not always 50/50.

What counts as marital usually turns on when something was acquired, not whose name is on it.

**MARITAL VS. SEPARATE**

When, not whose name  
Property and debt built up during the marriage are usually marital. Inheritances and gifts are usually separate — if you can trace them. Mixing separate money into joint accounts can change that.

**THE HARD ASSETS**

Homes, retirement, business  
Home equity and retirement are often part marital, part separate. Retirement is divided by a QDRO; some Ohio public pensions use a DOPO; military retirement has its own rules. A house, a business, or disputed values may need an appraisal or valuation.

**STANDARD ORDERS**

A mutual injunction is automatic  
On filing a divorce, annulment, or legal separation, Fulton issues a mutual preliminary injunction (Court Order No. 1) that binds both spouses from draining accounts, canceling insurance, or hiding assets. It is not a finding that either spouse did anything wrong.

**SPOUSAL SUPPORT****Can it be changed later?**

A court can order spousal support in a divorce or legal separation. After the decree, it can be modified only if the decree reserved that power and circumstances have changed (R.C. 3105.18). If support matters in your case, file the DR-1 (Income & Expenses) affidavit.

**A note on fault**

It is usually wise to include no-fault grounds. Courts will not punish a spouse for bad behavior by itself — but behavior that drained marital money or affected the children's safety can matter to the result. Ohio does not recognize common-law marriage; the date of marriage, and the date of separation, are what count.

TEMPORARY ORDERS & RESTRAINING ORDERS

# Rules for money, the house, and the kids while the case is open.

While a divorce, legal separation, or annulment is pending, either spouse can ask Judge Haselman for temporary orders, and in urgent situations for emergency (ex parte) orders. For violence, see the protection-order section.

**The mutual preliminary injunction (Court Order No. 1)**  
 On filing a divorce, annulment, or legal separation, the court automatically issues this mutual injunction — no separate motion needed. It binds both spouses from harassing each other or the children, running up joint debt, selling or hiding assets, and canceling insurance or beneficiaries.

**EMERGENCY (EX PARTE) ORDERS**  
 When there is a real, immediate danger. An ex parte order requires an affidavit of exigent circumstances and a statement of efforts to notify the other side. The enjoined party can request a hearing — set within about 10 days of the request (otherwise within three weeks of service).

**TEMPORARY SUPPORT & CUSTODY**  
 While you wait for the final order  
 The court can set temporary custody, parenting time, child support, and spousal support under Civ.R. 75(N). Financial requests need the DR-1 (Income & Expenses) affidavit, and there is no temporary support without a completed child-support worksheet.

<b>ANSWER A COMPLAINT</b>	<b>PARENTING CLASS</b>	<b>EX PARTE → HEARING</b>
28 days	75 days	~10 days

## CHANGING OR ENFORCING AN ORDER

# After the decree, you go back to the same case.

Changes and enforcement happen by motion in your original General & DR Division case, heard by Judge Haselman. A post-judgment motion in a case with children has a \$280 deposit.

**CHANGE CUSTODY****Change in circumstances**

To change the residential parent or legal custodian, you show a change in circumstances and that the change serves the child's best interest (R.C. 3109.04). The court can order parenting education again.

**CHANGE PARENTING TIME****Best interest**

Changing the schedule uses the best-interest standard (R.C. 3109.051). Use the standard Motion to Modify Parenting Time (SF 26).

**CHANGE SUPPORT****Substantial change**

Ask for a review on a substantial change — often 10%+ — through the court or an administrative review at the CSEA. Spousal support changes only if the decree reserved jurisdiction.

**ENFORCEMENT****When the other side won't follow the order**

File a Motion for Contempt with a separate Show Cause Order. The court can order make-up parenting time, a payment purge order (specific conditions to fix the violation and avoid the penalty), attorney fees, and — for willful violations — jail.

**OUT-OF-STATE ORDERS****Registering a foreign order**

To enforce or change an out-of-state order here, you register it: custody under the UCCJEA (R.C. Chapter 3127), support under UIFSA (R.C. Chapter 3115, usually through the CSEA). The foreign-judgment deposit is \$75.

**Moving with the children**

A residential parent who plans to move must file a Notice of Intent to Relocate (\$25) so the court can revisit parenting time (R.C. 3109.051(G)).

## LEGAL SEPARATION &amp; ANNULMENT

# Two narrower paths — and what they are not.

Both are filed with the Clerk of Courts and heard by Judge Haselman. Keep them separate from divorce and dissolution, and from each other.

**LEGAL SEPARATION (R.C. 3105.17)****Divides things, but you stay married**

A legal separation can divide property and set support, custody, and parenting time without ending the marriage. People choose it for religious or insurance reasons, or when they don't yet meet divorce residency. It is filed and processed like a divorce. It does not free either spouse to remarry, and either spouse can later seek a divorce.

**ANNULMENT (R.C. 3105.31)****Treats the marriage as never valid**

An annulment is a court declaration that a marriage was void or voidable — not a divorce, and not available just because a marriage was short. Grounds are specific (for example bigamy, fraud or force, being under the age of consent, or a marriage never consummated) and carry strict time limits and proof requirements. Because it turns on those grounds, get legal advice.

**Always confirm with the court**

Counties handle annulment details differently, and Fulton County publishes little on it — the standard Ohio forms and process apply. Confirm with the Clerk of Courts before you rely on a specific procedure. Military and international divorces also have their own rules and usually need experienced handling.

## PROTECTION ORDERS

# A court order to stop threats, abuse, or stalking.

In Fulton County, domestic-violence and dating-violence civil protection orders are filed on the General & Domestic Relations side (Judge Haselman). The Center for Child & Family Advocacy (419-335-4255) helps petitioners prepare them. There is no filing fee for the person asking for protection.

PETITION	WHERE TO GET IT	WHEN TO USE IT
<a href="#">Domestic Violence CPO (Form 10.01-D)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/domesticViolence/protection_forms/DVForms/10.01D.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/domesticViolence/protection_forms/DVForms/10.01D.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Abuse or threats by a family or household member.
<a href="#">Dating Violence CPO (Form 10.01-P)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/domesticViolence/protection_forms/DVForms/10.01P.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/domesticViolence/protection_forms/DVForms/10.01P.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Abuse by someone you are or were dating.
<a href="#">Civil Stalking / SOOPO (Form 10.03-D)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/domesticViolence/protection_forms/stalkingForms/10.03D.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/domesticViolence/protection_forms/stalkingForms/10.03D.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Stalking or a sexual offense by anyone.

- 1** **File — no fee**  
 Bring the petition to the Clerk of Courts; there is no cost to you.
- 2** **Same-day ex parte order**  
 The court holds an ex parte hearing and can issue a same-day order if the petition shows an immediate risk.
- 3** **Full hearing**  
 A full hearing follows (often within about 7 to 10 days), where the court can issue an order lasting up to 5 years. Law enforcement serves the respondent.

**IF AN ORDER IS VIOLATED**

**Call 911.**

Violating a protection order is a crime, and you can also pursue contempt. (A criminal temporary protection order is different — the prosecutor files it in a criminal case.)

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
 1-800-799-7233 · Fulton Children Services  
 (419) 337-0010 · The Center for Child & Family Advocacy (419) 335-4255.

## PROTECTING YOURSELF &amp; YOUR KIDS

# A few habits that help more than they seem to.

Family-law cases are stressful, and small choices can have big effects. None of this is about “winning” — it’s about protecting your children and yourself.

**DO****Keep a clear record**

- Move important conversations to writing, and save texts, emails, and account information.
- Keep a simple timeline of missed visits or incidents.
- Follow every existing order, even an imperfect one.

**DON'T****Avoid the backfires**

- Don't post about your case or your spouse on social media.
- Don't use the children as messengers or pull them into the conflict.
- Don't lock a spouse out, cancel their insurance, or destroy property — it violates the standard orders and hurts your case.

**Kids' safety comes first — and so does yours.**

If you are dealing with violence, financial pressure, or instability, help exists. Fulton County Children Services (419) 337-0010; statewide 1-855-OH-CHILD; National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233; or 911 in an emergency. Reach out — prioritizing well-being is not a sign of weakness.

**NOT SURE WHERE TO START?****A 2-minute quiz can point you to the right path.**

Fulton County's courts and forms can feel like a lot. If you're not sure whether you need a dissolution, a divorce, or something else, take Gavvl's free Find My Service quiz — it asks a few questions and points you to the right next step. [gavvl.com/find-my-service](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service) (<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>) · Or call (844) 694-2885.

## PART TWO

# Juvenile Court: custody when parents were never married.

When parents were never married to each other, the Fulton County Juvenile Division handles parentage, custody, parenting time, and child support. The first question is whether there is already a court order.

## QUICK PATHFINDER

## Is there already an order?

Setting up a first order is different from changing one that already exists. And for an unmarried father, establishing parentage comes before — and separately from — any custody or parenting-time rights.

## IN THIS PART

- Establishing parentage and first custody orders
- Parenting time and grandparent companionship
- Legal custody to a grandparent or other relative
- Changing or enforcing a juvenile order
- When Children Services is involved (CPS cases)

## PARENTAGE &amp; CUSTODY FOR UNMARRIED PARENTS

# Two separate steps, in the right order.

Until a court orders otherwise, an unmarried mother is the sole residential parent and legal custodian by law (R.C. 3109.042). An unmarried father has to take two separate steps — and the order is the part people most often get wrong.

01

## Establish parentage first

By a signed Acknowledgment of Paternity, an administrative order through the CSEA (it can order a DNA test), or a parentage case in Juvenile Court. This triggers child support — but by itself it does not give custody or parenting time.

02

## Then ask for custody / parenting time

Separately file in the Juvenile Court to be named residential parent or to set up shared parenting and a schedule. An at-home DNA test won't establish legal parentage — the court orders the test.

## FORM

## WHERE TO GET IT

## WHAT IT'S FOR

[Complaint for Parentage / Allocation \(SF 23 / JF 2\)](https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form23.pdf)

<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form23.pdf>

Supreme Court of Ohio

Establishes parentage and asks for custody & parenting time.

Fulton juvenile court forms

<https://www.fultoncountyohio.com/650/Juvenile-Court-Forms>

Local custody, POA/caretaker, and child-support forms.

## CHILD SUPPORT

### Set the same way

The Juvenile Court (with the CSEA) sets support under the Ohio guidelines (R.C. Chapter 3119) and it is paid through Ohio Child Support Payment Central. Estimate it at [gavvl.com/child-support-calculator](https://gavvl.com/child-support-calculator)

(<https://gavvl.com/child-support-calculator>).

## FULTON FILING FACTS

A new parentage or custody case has a \$200 deposit (a \$50 mediation fee comes out of it) and must include the R.C. 3109.27 child-custody affidavit. After service, the court sets an Initial Hearing on at least 3 days' notice.

## PARENTING TIME, COMPANIONSHIP &amp; NON-PARENT CUSTODY

# Time with a child — for parents and for relatives.

The words matter here. Parenting time is time a parent spends with a child; companionship (sometimes called visitation) is time a non-parent, like a grandparent, spends with a child.

**GRANDPARENT / RELATIVE COMPANIONSHIP**

Court-ordered time, in some situations

Ohio lets grandparents and certain relatives ask for companionship in defined situations — for example after a parent's death (R.C. 3109.11), or when parents are unmarried or divorcing (R.C. 3109.12). The court decides on the child's best interest.

**LEGAL CUSTODY TO A NON-PARENT**

When a relative is raising the child

A grandparent or other adult can ask the Juvenile Court for legal custody (R.C. 2151.23). Because parents have a protected interest, a non-parent generally must first show the parents are unsuitable. Legal custody leaves the parents' residual rights intact — it is less permanent than adoption.

**SHORT OF FULL CUSTODY**

Power of Attorney & Caretaker Affidavit

For school and medical decisions short of full custody, a relative caregiver can use Ohio's Power of Attorney or Caretaker Authorization Affidavit (R.C. 3109.51–3109.80). Fulton's Juvenile Court provides the form (file the child's birth certificate with it): [Fulton POA / Caretaker form](#)

(<https://www.fultoncountyoh.com/DocumentCenter/View/1622>).

**FULTON SPECIFICS**

Published schedules, automatic GAL for grandparents.

Fulton publishes its parenting-time schedules at [fultoncountyoh.com/233](https://www.fultoncountyoh.com/233). A grandparent or relative companionship request triggers automatic appointment of a guardian ad litem. Court-referred mediation (Rule 14) is the main path for parenting and visitation disputes.

## CHANGING A JUVENILE ORDER · WHEN CHILDREN SERVICES IS INVOLVED

# Two very different situations.

Changes to a juvenile order happen in the same Juvenile case. A child-protection (CPS) case is something else entirely — it is brought by the county to keep a child safe, not a custody fight between two parents.

## MODIFY OR ENFORCE

### Back to the same Juvenile case

To change custody, show a change in circumstances plus best interest (R.C. 3109.04). To change parenting time, show best interest (R.C. 3109.051). A motion to modify filed within 48 months of the prior order triggers automatic appointment of a guardian ad litem. To enforce, file a Motion for Contempt with a Show Cause Order.

## REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT

### Who to call in Fulton County.

Fulton County Children Services: (419) 337-0010, Option 3 then 2, during business hours (or (800) 344-3575). After hours, call the Sheriff at (419) 335-4010, or 911 in an emergency. Ohio law protects good-faith reports.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Motion for Change of Custody (SF 27 / JF 6)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form27.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form27.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Asks to change the custody order.
<a href="#">Motion for Contempt (SF 24 / JF 3)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form24.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form24.pdf</a>	Supreme Court of Ohio	Enforces a juvenile order; file with a Show Cause Order.

## IF A CPS CASE IS OPENED

### What to expect — and your rights

Children Services assesses risk and usually tries to keep children safely at home with services, looking first to a relative if placement is needed. A court case can lead to protective supervision, temporary custody, a reunification case plan, or — in the most serious cases — termination of parental rights. You have the right to an attorney, including an appointed one if you qualify, and the court appoints a guardian ad litem for the child.

## PART THREE

# Probate Court: stepparent & kinship adoption.

Adoptions go through the Fulton County Probate Division, (419) 337-9242 (it shares an office with the Juvenile Court). Adoption permanently changes a child's legal parents.

## CONSENT

### Whose yes you need

Usually both birth parents must consent. It may not be required if a parent failed, without justifiable cause, to support or contact the child for a year (R.C. 3107.07). A child 12+ usually consents too.

## HOME STUDY

### Done through JFS — not billed

The court runs the home study through Fulton County Job & Family Services — not billed to you. Background checks, a home visit, references: a standard step, not a test.

## CUSTODY IS NOT ADOPTION

### A permanent change

Legal custody can change later and leaves a parent's rights intact. Adoption permanently ends them and is final. In Ohio, unmarried people can't adopt together.

1

## File the petition

File in the Probate Division using the Ohio standardized forms; a lawful placement comes first. Deposit: stepparent \$650 / kinship \$700, first child (cash or check).

2

## Notices & assessment

Counsel handles notices, including a Putative Father Registry search for a child born after 1997.

3

## Hearing & decree

Contested adoptions get a scheduling conference. After the hearing, the court signs the decree and a new birth record issues.

## IS ADOPTION THE RIGHT STEP?

Adoption questions are worth a conversation.

Consent and notice rules are where adoptions get complicated. The 2-minute quiz can help you sort out where you stand.

[gavvl.com/find-my-service](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service)

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

## PART FOUR

# How Gavvl Law can help.

This guide gave you the map. If you'd like company on the road, here is what working with our firm looks like. You don't always need the same kind of help — and we'll tell you when you don't.

## FULL REPRESENTATION

A lawyer manages the whole case with you.

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

## LIMITED-SCOPE (FLAT FEE)

Hire us for the specific part you need.

Document drafting and filing, a single hearing, advice, or a document review — at a flat fee per task. Best for uncontested matters, simple modifications, and tight budgets. Not recommended for complex or high-conflict cases that need ongoing advocacy. A limited-scope matter can move to full representation if it becomes contested.

### Divorce & dissolution

Strategy, settlement terms, filing packets, temporary orders, and final hearings.

### Custody & parenting

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

### Child & spousal support

Support calculations, deviations, modifications, and enforcement.

### Adoption

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

## WAYS TO PAY

### Options that fit different budgets

The available options depend on the service model. For limited-scope flat-fee work, you can pay in full or use Affirm, Klarna, or PayPal financing — or Gavvl Direct, an in-house plan with no credit check (a financed balance carries 19% annual interest, compounded monthly). For full-representation retainers, you can pay in full or use Affirm. Exact payment amounts are calculated when you enroll. Financing questions: [financing@gavvl.com](mailto:financing@gavvl.com).

## TAKE THE NEXT STEP

# Three easy ways to get started.

Whichever path fits, the first move is small. Start with the quiz if you're not sure, or reach out directly.

## START HERE

## Find My Service quiz

About 2 minutes. Answer a few questions and get a personalized recommendation and financing options.

[gavvl.com/find-my-service](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service)

(<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>)

## TALK TO US

## Low-cost consultation

Schedule a low-cost consultation by phone or video.

(844) 694-2885

[support@gavvl.com](mailto:support@gavvl.com)

## ONLINE

## Get started page

Begin online whenever it's convenient.

[gavvl.com/start](https://gavvl.com/start)

(<https://gavvl.com/start>)

## Why families choose Gavvl Law

A modern Ohio family-law firm serving all 88 counties, with 4.8+ stars across 90+ verified Google reviews and more than 50 years of combined family-law experience. Recognized by Best Lawyers as a 2026 "Firm to Watch." Co-founded by attorneys who have personally been through divorce and custody. (Awards and ratings reflect others' experiences and aren't a prediction about your case.)

## READY WHEN YOU ARE

## Not sure which path fits your situation?

Take the 2-minute quiz or reach out directly. We'll help you name the court, the likely path, and the level of help that fits the moment — no pressure.

(844) 694-2885

[support@gavvl.com](mailto:support@gavvl.com)

[gavvl.com/find-my-service](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service)

1677 Old Henderson Road, Columbus, OH 43220

## IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

# The fine print, in plain language.

Please read these before relying on anything in this guide.

## Information, not legal advice

This guide explains how things generally work in Fulton 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.

## Fees and procedures change

Court fees, forms, and procedures change. The information here was verified as of June 18, 2026 from official Fulton County court sources. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Fulton County Clerk of Courts before you file.

## About awards and reviews

Awards, ratings, and reviews 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.

## Jurisdiction & privacy

Gavvl Law attorneys are licensed to practice law in Ohio. This guide describes Ohio law and Fulton County procedure only. Our privacy policy is at [gavvl.com/privacy-policy](https://gavvl.com/privacy-policy).

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