

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Greene County

A plain-English map to divorce, dissolution, custody, support, protection orders, and adoption in Greene County: which court handles your issue, what to file, what it costs, and when to ask for help.

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

 - 02** Tell dissolution, divorce, juvenile custody, and adoption apart.

 - 03** See the exact local forms, fees, deadlines, and filing steps that trip people up in Xenia — including the court's pre-filing compliance review.

 - 04** Pick a next step that fits your situation, budget, and timeline.

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START HERE

Use this guide like a map, not a law textbook.

Family-law problems get easier the moment you can name the court, the path, the paperwork, and your next decision. Greene County splits this work across three courts, so step one is knowing which one is yours.

01

Married, or ending a marriage?

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, and annulment are heard by the Domestic Relations Court on Ledbetter Road (Judge Cynthia Martin).

02

Parents who were never married?

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents go to the Juvenile Division on Greene Way Boulevard, where the Judge is also the Clerk.

03

Adopting a stepchild or relative?

Adoption is filed in the Greene County Probate Court on North Detroit Street (Judge Thomas O'Diam).

READ THIS FIRST

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Greene 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.

GREENE COUNTY COURTS

Where your case lives, and who to call.

Three separate courts handle Greene County family law, each at its own address in Xenia. Two local habits matter before you file anything.

COURT	WHAT IT HANDLES	WHERE / CONTACT
Domestic Relations Court Common Pleas	Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, and protection orders (DVCPO, dating violence, stalking)	595 Ledbetter Road, Xenia Judge Cynthia Martin (937) 562-6249
Juvenile Division Judge is the Clerk	Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents; non-parent custody	2100 Greene Way Blvd., Xenia Judge Amy H. Lewis (937) 562-4000
Probate Court	Stepparent and kinship adoption	45 N. Detroit St., Xenia Judge Thomas O'Diam (937) 562-5280
Clerk of Courts Legal Division	Dockets DR cases — but only after the DR Court approves the paperwork (see right)	Greene County Clerk of Courts Files Domestic Relations cases

GREENE COUNTY QUIRK #1

DR papers get a compliance review before filing.

Under DR Local Rule 1.7, you do not file divorce or other DR pleadings directly with the Clerk. You first submit them to the Domestic Relations Court for a compliance review; once approved, the Court forwards them to the Clerk for filing. Submitting for review is not itself a filing.

GREENE COUNTY QUIRK #2

In Juvenile cases, the Judge is the Clerk.

For unmarried-parent custody, parenting time, and support, you file in person at the Clerk of Court office on the 2nd floor of the Juvenile Court, 2100 Greene Way Boulevard. There is no separate county Clerk intake for these cases.

GREENE COUNTY COURTS

Child support, child safety, and filing notes.

Two more offices matter in family cases, plus a few habits that keep your filing moving.

MONEY FOR THE KIDS

Child support — Greene County CSEA

The Child Support Enforcement Agency sets up and enforces support and can review an order administratively. Find it through the county's CSEA page; the statewide calculator estimates the guideline number.

TWO THINGS THAT DELAY FILINGS

Plan for review, and skip personal checks at Juvenile.

DR pleadings must clear the Court's compliance review before the Clerk files them, so build in time. The Juvenile Court does not accept personal checks — use cash, money order, cashier's or attorney-trust check, or a card (a payment-plan surcharge may apply).

IF A CHILD MAY BE UNSAFE

Reporting abuse or neglect

Call Greene County Children Services at (937) 562-6600 — available 24/7, at 601 Ledbetter Road, Xenia. The statewide hotline is 1-855-642-4453. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

DR filing fee	\$350 (divorce, dissolution, more)
Juvenile custody complaint	\$130 first child
Stepparent adoption	\$104 + \$750 assessor
Fee too high?	ask to waive it (poverty affidavit)

PART ONE

Domestic Relations: the married-couple court.

If you are married and ending it, the Domestic Relations Court on Ledbetter Road handles your case. It also issues protection orders. This part walks through each path in the order most people meet them.

COURT	WHERE	JUDGE	FILES WITH
Common Pleas (DR)	595 Ledbetter Rd.	Cynthia Martin	Clerk, after review

ONE HABIT TO REMEMBER IN EVERY DR FILING

Compliance review comes first.

Greene County's Domestic Relations Court reviews every pleading for compliance before the Clerk files it (Local Rule 1.7). It is also strict about its own forms — the county Affidavit of Financial Disclosure is mandatory, with no substitutes. Both habits are built into the sections below.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Dissolution: the fully agreed way to end a marriage.

A dissolution is the no-fault path for couples who agree on everything. You both sign a full agreement, file a joint petition, and appear together at a short hearing. No one is served, and there are no fault grounds to prove.

COURT	FILING FEE	HEARING	SERVICE
Common Pleas (DR)	\$350	30–90 days	None — joint filing

This path may fit if...

- You both agree the marriage should end.
- Property, debt, support, and parenting are already settled in writing.
- You will both sign the paperwork and attend the final hearing.

Watch the agreement, not just the forms.
 A clean-looking packet can still cause years of trouble 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	Joint Petition for Dissolution
Agreement	Separation Agreement, signed by both
If minor children	Parenting plan, support worksheet, decree
Parenting class	Both spouses, before the hearing
Final step	Short hearing where you both confirm the deal

A REAL GREENE COUNTY RULE
 Both spouses take the parenting class.
 For a dissolution with minor children, the Seminar for Separating Parents must be completed by both spouses before the final hearing (it's stricter than for a divorce, where only the custodial parent must finish first). The proposed decree is filed with the petition.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Divorce: are you starting it, or responding to it?

Divorce does not always mean a trial. It means one spouse files, the other is served, and the court sets a structure. Your very first move depends on which side of that you are on.

A You are starting the divorce

You prepare the Complaint for Divorce and the county's standard packet — including the mandatory Affidavit of Financial Disclosure and the Mutual Restraining Orders — and submit it for the Court's compliance review before the Clerk files it.

B You were served with divorce papers

Read the first page for your answer deadline. You generally have 28 days from service to file an Answer (and a Counterclaim if you want your own requests). Greene County publishes Answer forms with and without children, plus a Communication Questionnaire for the responding party.

COURT	FEE	ANSWER DEADLINE	FILES WITH
Common Pleas (DR)	\$350	28 days	Clerk, after review

TWO WORDS PEOPLE MIX UP

“Uncontested” divorce is not a dissolution.

In Greene County, an uncontested divorce is the default-style case — your spouse can't be found or doesn't participate, so the court proceeds on your evidence (the county provides an Affidavit of Diligent Search for unknown-address service). A dissolution is a fully agreed joint filing with no one served. There is also an agreed divorce, where both take part and settle inside the case.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

What do I fill out, and where do I get it?

Greene County publishes complete pro se packets and expects its own forms to be used. The county Affidavit of Financial Disclosure is mandatory, and it doubles as your request for temporary orders.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Packet — Divorce With Children https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12091/Package---Divorce-With-Children-PDF	Greene County DR (Document Center)	Everything needed to start a divorce involving minor children
Complaint for Divorce With Children https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/11987/Complaint-for-Divorce-With-Children-PDF	Greene County DR	The pleading that starts the case
Affidavit of Financial Disclosure https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/493/Affidavit-of-Financial-Disclosure-PDF	Greene County DR	Your finances — mandatory, no substitutes, and your temporary-orders request
<p>⚠ Heads up: This is the county's required form. No other financial affidavit may be substituted (Local Rule 1.9(C)).</p>		
Mutual Restraining Orders https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/495/Mutual-Restraining-Orders-PDF	Greene County DR	Part of the standard new-divorce packet
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/502/Parenting-Proceeding-Affidavit-PDF	Greene County DR	Required with children — where they've lived and any other cases
Parenting Seminar Order https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2612/Parenting-Seminar-Order-PDF	Greene County DR	Orders the Seminar for Separating Parents in any with-children case
IV-D Application https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2607/IV-D-Application-PDF	Greene County DR	Opens the CSEA support file

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

What does a Greene County divorce look like?

Most divorces settle. The steps below are the path the court sets in motion once your papers clear compliance review and the case is filed.

WHEN DIVORCE IS THE RIGHT TOOL

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

Divorce is often the necessary path when a spouse won't sign, money is unclear, parenting time is disputed, or someone needs the court to act before everything is settled.

Answer deadline	28 days after service
Temp-order review	within 15 days after answer
Pre-trial	no sooner than 42 days after service
Decree	passes compliance review too

1 Prepare the packet, then pass compliance review
 Complete the divorce packet and Communication Questionnaire, then submit it to the DR Court for compliance review before the Clerk files it.

2 File and pay (or ask to waive the fee)
 After approval, the Clerk files the case with the \$350 deposit, or a poverty affidavit if you can't afford it.

3 Serve your spouse
 Service is by certified mail, sheriff, or waiver; if an address is unknown, by posting or publication with an Affidavit of Diligent Search.

4 Temporary orders and disclosure
 Your Affidavit of Financial Disclosure is the temporary-orders request. The court reviews for temporary orders within 15 days after the answer period; full financial disclosure follows within 30 days.

5 Parenting class, then settle or go to hearing
 With children, the custodial parent finishes the Seminar for Separating Parents before the final hearing. Many cases settle; if not, a judge or magistrate decides.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Legal separation and annulment: the other two doors.

Not every case is a divorce. Two less-common paths solve different problems, and both are heard in the Domestic Relations Court the same way, with the \$350 deposit and compliance review.

Legal separation (R.C. 3105.17)

A court divides property, sets support, and orders parenting — but you stay legally married. People choose it for religious, insurance, or timing reasons. The process mirrors a divorce, and you can later file a divorce or dissolution.

Annulment (R.C. 3105.31)

A court declares a marriage void or voidable on a specific legal ground — such as bigamy, being underage, fraud, duress, incapacity, or non-consummation. A short or unhappy marriage is not, by itself, a ground.

DON'T CONFUSE TWO SIMILAR TERMS

“Legal separation” is a status; a “Separation Agreement” is a document.

Legal separation is a court case that leaves you married. A Separation Agreement is the signed settlement used in a dissolution and in agreed cases. Greene County publishes complete packets and pro se guides for legal separation (with and without children) and for annulment.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Temporary orders and emergencies while you wait.

A case can take months. Temporary orders set the rules for support, the home, and the children in the meantime. True emergencies and married-parent custody have their own paths in this court.

Temporary orders (Civ.R. 75(N))

There is no separate temporary-orders motion at filing — the support sections of your Affidavit of Financial Disclosure are the request. The court reviews the case within 15 days after the answer period. While spouses share a household, no temporary support or custody is set.

WHEN A CHILD IS IN DANGER

Ex parte emergency custody.

If a child faces immediate risk, a Motion for Ex Parte Emergency Custody with a supporting affidavit can ask for same-day relief. The court then sets a prompt hearing with notice to the other parent. It is temporary — final custody is decided later under R.C. 3109.04.

Married parents not divorcing.

The DR Court can also decide custody for married parents who are not ending their marriage — there is a Legal Custody (Married Persons) packet, and an emergency version when a child is at immediate risk.

A protection order can also help fast.

If the danger involves domestic violence, a protection order can provide immediate ex parte protection, including temporary custody terms (next pages).

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Objections and appeals: review, not a redo.

If a magistrate decides your case, or a judge enters a final order you disagree with, there are short deadlines to ask for review. Missing them usually ends the issue.

FIRST LEVEL

Objecting to a magistrate's decision

A magistrate handles many DR matters. You generally have 14 days to file written objections under Civ.R. 53. If you object to the facts, you must order a transcript. The judge then reviews what the magistrate did — it is not a fresh trial. The county publishes an Objection Procedures handout.

Then: appeal to the Court of Appeals

To appeal a final judgment, you generally have 30 days to file a notice of appeal (App.R. 4). An appeal reviews the record for legal error; you do not get to re-argue the facts or add new evidence.

Deadlines run from the entry.

The clock starts when the decision or judgment is filed. If you think something went wrong, move quickly — these windows do not pause while you decide.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Protection orders when you are not safe.

Greene County's Domestic Relations Court issues four kinds of civil protection orders, and there is never a filing fee for the person seeking protection.

Four kinds, one court

The DR Court issues Domestic Violence Civil Protection Orders (for family or household members), Dating Violence Protection Orders, Civil Stalking Protection Orders, and Sexually Oriented Offense Protection Orders. (If the person you're filing against is under 18, that's a Juvenile protection order instead.)

How fast, and how long.

An ex parte hearing is held the same day you file; if granted, the order is effective immediately. A full hearing follows within about 7 to 10 court days, and a final order can last up to five years. A divorce filing does not change or end a protection order — that takes a separate motion and hearing.

A REAL GREENE COUNTY RESOURCE

A Protection Order Coordinator helps you.

The DR Court has a dedicated Protection Order Coordinator who assists from the petition through the full hearing and tracks service: (937) 562-6236.

Filing fee	none, ever
Ex parte hearing	same day you file
Full hearing	about 7–10 court days
Final order	up to 5 years

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
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[Protection Order Packet — DVCPO With Children](#)

<https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10343/Protection-Order---Packet-Domestic-Violence-Civil-Protection-Order-With-Children-PDF>

Greene County DR

Domestic violence protection where children are involved

⚠ Heads up: There is no filing fee for a protection order. The Protection Order Coordinator can help you complete it.

[Protection Order Packet — DVCPO Without Children](#)

<https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10344/Protection-Order---Packet-Domestic-Violence-Civil-Protection-Order-Without-Children-PDF>

Greene County DR

Domestic violence protection with no children involved

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Protection Order Packet — Dating Violence https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/27160/Protection-Order---Packet-Dating-Violence-Protection-Order-PDF	Greene County DR	Protection from a person in a dating relationship
Protection Order Packet — Stalking or Sexually Oriented Offense https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10342/Protection-Order---Packet-Civil-Stalking-Or-Sexually-Oriented-Offense-Protection-Order-PDF	Greene County DR	Protection with no domestic relationship required

NOT SURE WHICH PATH IS YOURS?

Take the 2-minute quiz — it routes you to the right starting point.

Dissolution, divorce, a custody case, or just a consult? Gavvl's Find My Service quiz gives a personalized recommendation in about two minutes. [Take the quiz](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service) (https://gavvl.com/find-my-service) · Call (844) 694-2885.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Dividing property, and protecting your case.

Ohio divides marital property and debt equitably — fairly, which is not always equally. A few day-to-day habits protect you while any of the paths above plays out.

Marital vs. separate

Marital property and debt is generally what was acquired during the marriage; separate property includes pre-marriage assets, gifts, and inheritances kept separate. Timing and tracing matter. Retirement accounts are often divided by a special order (a QDRO or DOPO).

Do

- Keep communication in writing, and save it.
- Gather financial records — the county affidavit asks for a lot.
- Put the children's needs first, and your own second.

Don't

- Don't post about your case or your spouse online.
- Don't use the children as messengers.
- Don't drain accounts or cancel insurance — it can violate the restraining order.

PART TWO

Juvenile Court: when parents were never married.

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents are decided by the Juvenile Division on Greene Way Boulevard — where the Judge is also the Clerk. Greene County moves these cases quickly.

COURT	WHERE	JUDGE / CLERK	HEARING SET
Juvenile Division	2100 Greene Way Blvd.	Amy H. Lewis	within 3 business days

A STARTING RULE WORTH KNOWING

An unmarried mother starts as sole residential parent.

By law, until a court order (or a shared parenting plan) says otherwise, the unmarried mother is the sole residential parent and legal custodian (R.C. 3109.042). A father establishes parentage first, then asks the court for custody or parenting time.

JUVENILE COURT

Unmarried parents: paternity first, then custody.

This is the most common Juvenile family-law case. It happens in two steps, and Greene County's rules make the first step fast.

Step one: establish parentage

Parentage is the legal parent-child link (R.C. Chapter 3111). It can be set by an Acknowledgment of Paternity, by CSEA genetic testing, or by a court case. In a Greene County court case, DNA testing is ordered immediately on any party's motion, with the case paused until results arrive. Establishing parentage opens support; it does not by itself decide custody.

Step two: ask for custody

Once parentage is set, a parent files a Complaint for Custody. The court names one parent sole residential parent and legal custodian (with parenting time to the other) or approves shared parenting under a plan. Support is decided at the same time — bring income evidence to every support hearing. Ohio has no “primary” or “joint” custody.

GREENE COUNTY MOVES FAST

Your hearing is set within 3 business days of filing.

Compared with many counties, Greene County Juvenile docketing is quick. File the Complaint for Custody with the Parenting Proceeding Affidavit, the Juvenile Court Face Sheet, and the Affidavit of Income and Expenses (plus the IV-D Application to use CSEA services).

JUVENILE COURT

Forms for an unmarried-parent case.

These are filed in person at the Juvenile Clerk's office, 2nd floor, 2100 Greene Way Boulevard. The county publishes a plain-language explainer of an unmarried mother's rights, too.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Custody https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21823/Complaint-for-Custody-PDF	Greene County Juvenile	Asks the court to allocate custody and parenting time
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit (UCCJEA) https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/24892/Parenting-Proceeding-Affidavit-PDF	Greene County Juvenile	Where the child has lived and any other custody cases
Juvenile Court Face Sheet https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25172/Juvenile-Court-Face-Sheet-PDF	Greene County Juvenile	Required cover sheet filed with the complaint
Affidavit of Income and Expenses https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/24891/Affidavit-of-Income-and-Expenses-PDF	Greene County Juvenile	Your finances for the child-support calculation
Proposed Shared Parenting Plan https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/31446/Proposed-Shared-Parenting-Plan-PDF	Greene County Juvenile	Used when both parents will be legal custodian under a plan
Custody Rights of Unmarried Mother https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/32634/Custody-Rights-of-Unmarried-Mother	Greene County Juvenile	Plain-language explainer of the starting custody rule

JUVENILE COURT

Parenting time and grandparent companionship.

“Parenting time” is the schedule a parent has with a child. “Companionship” is the separate, narrower time a grandparent or relative may be granted. They are not the same thing.

The default schedule

Unless parents agree otherwise, the court uses its Standard Order of Parenting Time (effective November 26, 2024). One Juvenile complaint form covers all of it — the Complaint for Parenting Time, Companionship, or Visitation. Deviations follow the child's best interest (R.C. 3109.051).

Grandparent and relative companionship

Non-parents do not have automatic rights. A grandparent or relative may seek companionship when a parent has died (R.C. 3109.11) or the child was born to an unmarried mother (R.C. 3109.12). The court weighs the child's best interest and gives special weight to a fit parent's wishes.

A boundary worth knowing.

If the parents' rights were already set in a Greene County divorce, parenting-time changes belong in that DR case, not Juvenile.

SHORT-OF-COURT TOOLS

POA and caretaker packets.

For school and medical authority without a custody case, Greene County publishes a Grandparent Power of Attorney packet and a Caretaker Authorization packet. Both are revocable and do not transfer custody.

JUVENILE COURT

When a grandparent or relative is raising the child.

A non-parent can ask the Juvenile Division for legal custody of a child. It gives decision-making authority and physical care, while parents keep certain residual rights. It is not adoption.

A HIGHER BAR THAN PARENT-VS-PARENT
The 'unsuitability' standard.
 When a non-parent seeks custody against a parent, best interest alone is not enough. The non-parent must generally show the parent is unsuitable — abandonment, an agreement to give up custody, an inability to provide care, or that parental custody would harm the child.

Custody is not adoption.
 Legal custody leaves parents with residual rights and can be changed later. Adoption permanently ends parental rights and goes through Probate Court.

How to file
 File the Complaint for Custody (the same county form parents use), with the Parenting Proceeding Affidavit and Face Sheet, in person at the Juvenile Clerk's office. When a child faces immediate risk, there is a Complaint for Emergency Custody. A relative can also ask to join an open abuse/neglect case by Motion to Intervene.

Complaint fee	\$130 first child
Each additional child	+\$100
Emergency add-on	+\$75
Fee too high?	ask to waive it

JUVENILE COURT

Child support, and changing a Juvenile order.

Ohio builds child support from both parents' incomes, and a Juvenile order can be changed when life changes. Modifications stay in the Juvenile case that made the original order.

How support is built

Ohio uses an income-shares model: both parents' incomes, work-related child care, health-insurance cost, and the number of children go into a statewide worksheet. About 90 or more overnights a year can adjust the number. The CSEA can set up and enforce the order.

Changing an order

Custody changes need a real change in circumstances plus the child's best interest (R.C. 3109.04(E)); parenting-time changes use the best-interest standard; support changes on a financial change (the CSEA can also review it). Use the Juvenile motion that matches your case.

RUN YOUR OWN NUMBERS FIRST

Estimate before you negotiate.

Gavvl Law has a free Ohio child-support estimator you can use before any filing or hearing: gavvl.com/child-support-calculator
(<https://gavvl.com/child-support-calculator>).

Modify custody motion	\$100
Modify support motion	\$80
Register a foreign order	\$55
Enforce an order	contempt complaint

JUVENILE COURT

When Children Services is involved.

When a child may be abused, neglected, or dependent, Greene County Children Services investigates and, if needed, files a case in the Juvenile Division. The process protects the child while working toward a safe, permanent home.

The stages, in plain order

1. A report comes in; the agency investigates.
2. If a child is removed, a shelter-care hearing happens quickly.
3. Adjudication: the court decides if the child is abused, neglected, or dependent.
4. Disposition: the court sets placement and a case plan.
5. Reviews and permanency hearings follow until there is a lasting outcome.

You may have a lawyer; the child has a GAL.

If you qualify financially, the court appoints counsel for a parent, and a Guardian ad Litem (with Greene County's active CASA program) represents the child.

REPORT FIRST IF A CHILD IS AT RISK

Who to call.

Greene County Children Services: (937) 562-6600, 24/7, 601 Ledbetter Road, Xenia.
Statewide: 1-855-642-4453. Emergency: 911.

THESE CASES ARE HARD – YOU DON'T HAVE TO FACE THEM ALONE

Support exists for the difficult parts.

If there is violence, instability, or a child-welfare case in the mix, the court appoints counsel for those who qualify, protection orders cost nothing to file, and the resources on the disclosures page are there for a reason.

PART THREE

Probate Court: stepparent and kinship adoption.

Adoption permanently makes an adult the legal parent of a child. In Greene County it is filed in the Probate Court on North Detroit Street (Judge Thomas O'Diam), which has exclusive authority to finalize it.

COURT	WHERE	STEPARENT FEE	ADULT ADOPTION
Probate Court	45 N. Detroit St.	\$104 + \$750 assessor	\$76

TWO TRUTHS ABOUT ADOPTION

It is permanent, and it is not the same as custody.

Custody arranges care and can be changed; adoption permanently ends one legal parent relationship and creates another. In a stepparent adoption, the non-custodial parent's rights end while the custodial parent's continue. A home study by a court-appointed assessor is required (adult adoptions excepted), and its fee is separate.

PROBATE COURT

What a Greene County adoption involves.

The Probate Court uses the Ohio standard adoption forms (the 18-series, revised in 2025) and a county checklist. Plan for background checks and the assessor's home study.

A MONEY-AND-TIME NOTE**Budget for the assessor.**

A stepparent adoption is \$104 in court costs, but the assessor's home study is a separate \$750 (plus \$50 per additional child). Adult adoptions are \$76 and need no home study.

Use fresh 2025 forms.

The 18-series petition and decree forms were revised in 2025 — pull current copies rather than reusing saved versions. Filings that require payment must be in by 3:30 p.m.

1**Assemble the initial filing**

Use the county's Checklist for Initial Filing. File the Petition for Adoption of a Minor (18.0) with consents (18.3) or the consent-not-required allegation, the Putative Father Registry search, and the CSEA notice.

2**Background checks and assessor**

Petitioners submit to background checks, including a Child Abuse Registry check, and the court appoints an assessor for the home study (adult adoptions excepted).

3**Consent or its exceptions**

Consent is generally required, but the court can find it not required (Form 18.4) when, without justifiable cause, a parent had no more than minimal contact or paid no support for the year before filing. A child 12 or older must also consent.

4**Hearing**

Contested-consent issues are heard first. The court may enter an interlocutory order (18.5) or proceed to the final decree.

5**Final decree**

The court enters the Final Decree of Adoption (18.6 or 18.7), after which a new birth record can issue.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
18.0 — Petition for Adoption of a Minor (Revised 2025) https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5386/180-Petition-for-Adoption-of-Minor-PDFRevised-2025	Greene County Probate	Starts a stepparent or kinship adoption
18.3 — Consent to Adoption https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5389/183-Consent-to-Adoption-PDF	Greene County Probate	A parent's written consent to the adoption
18.4 — Judgment Entry Finding Consent Not Required https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5390/184-Judgment-Entry-Finding-Consent-Not-Required-PDF	Greene County Probate	Used when the court finds a parent's consent is not required
Checklist for Initial Filing (Step-Parent / Private) https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5385/-Checklist-for-Initial-Filing-of-Step-Parent--Private-Adoption-PDF	Greene County Probate	The county's list of what the first filing must include
Application for Search of Ohio Putative Father Registry https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5404/Application-for-Search-of-Ohio-Putative-Father-Registry-PDF	Greene County Probate	A required registry search filed with the petition

THINKING ABOUT AN ADOPTION OR A CUSTODY CHANGE?

Talk it through before you file.

Adoption and custody cases turn on consent, notice, and timing — the kinds of details where early advice saves months. Gavvl's quiz points you to the right service in about two minutes. [Take the quiz](#)

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

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help.

This guide gave you the map. If you'd like a hand from here, here is what working with Gavvl looks like — and the two ways we usually help.

Limited-scope (flat fee)

You handle parts of your own case and hire us for specific tasks at a flat, agreed price — reviewing a Separation Agreement, preparing a filing packet (and getting it through compliance review), coaching you for a hearing, or drafting a parenting plan. Predictable cost, right-sized help.

Full representation

We handle the whole matter — strategy, filings, temporary orders, negotiation, and hearings — on a retainer plus hourly basis. Best when a case is contested, complex, or moving fast and you want someone carrying it.

Divorce & dissolution

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

Custody & parenting

Unmarried-parent and married cases, shared parenting plans, schedules, and modifications.

Child support

Calculations, income documentation, deviations, modifications, and enforcement.

Adoption

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

PART FOUR

Ways to pay, and how to start.

The options depend on the service model, because Ohio trust-accounting rules treat retainers differently from flat fees. Exact amounts are calculated when you enroll.

RETAINER + HOURLY**Full representation**

Pay in full by secure card (Confido Legal). Affirm financing is available — monthly payments with a soft credit check that doesn't affect your score.

FLAT FEE**Limited-scope**

Pay in full by card (Confido Legal). Affirm, Klarna, or PayPal Pay Later. Or Gavvl Direct — our in-house plan with no credit check.

NO CREDIT CHECK**Gavvl Direct**

Start with 60% down and finance the rest, or finance the full fee once 60% is paid. Schedules of 18 weekly, 8 bi-weekly, or 4 monthly payments. The financed amount carries 19% annual interest, compounded monthly.

NOT SURE WHICH PATH FITS?

The 2-minute quiz gives a personalized recommendation.

Find My Service asks a few questions and suggests a service and financing option. [Take the quiz](#)

(<https://gavvl.com/find-my-service>) · [Start here](#) (<https://gavvl.com/start>) · (844) 694-2885 · support@gavvl.com.

Consultations are low-cost.

WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE GAVVL

A 4.8+ average across 90+ verified Google reviews, recognized by Best Lawyers as a “Firm to Watch” (2026), with 50+ years of combined family-law experience across all 88 Ohio counties. (See the disclosures page — awards and ratings are not a prediction about your case.)

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURES

The fine print, in plain English.

Please read this before relying on anything in this guide.

Information, not legal advice.

This guide explains how things generally work in Greene 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.

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.

Fees and procedures change.

Court fees, forms, and procedures change, and some Juvenile Court fees come from an older published schedule. The information here was verified as of June 10, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees with the relevant Greene County court before you file.

Jurisdiction and responsibility.

Gavvl Law attorneys are licensed to practice law in Ohio. This guide describes Ohio law and Greene County procedure only. Advertising material, Gavvl Law LLC. Attorney responsible for this content: Stephanie Green, Esq., Managing Partner. Privacy policy:

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READY WHEN YOU ARE.

Take the 2-minute quiz or talk with our team.

We'll help you find the right court, the likely path, and the level of help that fits the moment.

(844) 694-2885

support@gavvl.com

gavvl.com/find-my-service

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