

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Lorain County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Elyria and across Lorain County: which court handles your case, what to file, what it costs, and when to get help.

01 See how Lorain County combines Domestic Relations and Juvenile in one Family Court.

02 Know the difference between dissolution, divorce, juvenile custody, and probate adoption.

03 Find the right form, the deposit, and the local rules that trip people up.

04 Pick a next step that fits your budget, your timeline, and how much conflict there is.

START HERE

Use this guide like a map, not a rulebook.

Family law gets easier once you name a few things: the court, the path, the paperwork, and your next step. This guide is built on those questions for Lorain County.

01

Which court handles this?

Divorce, dissolution, and juvenile custody all run through the combined Domestic Relations and Juvenile Court at the Justice Center. Adoption is a separate Probate Court in the same building.

02

Do we agree, or is there a fight?

Agreement changes everything. Dissolution and uncontested filings run on signed paperwork. If someone disagrees, misses deadlines, or safety is a worry, plan for a more protective path.

03

What should I gather first?

Gather any current orders and your income records. Add insurance details, the kids' birth certificates, school and parenting-time notes, and a short list of what you want the court to decide.

THIS GUIDE IS INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

It explains how things usually work in Lorain County. It cannot cover the facts of your case. Reading it, downloading it, or contacting Gavvl Law does not make you a client. Only a signed engagement agreement does that. For advice about your own case, talk with a licensed Ohio attorney.

E-FILING, WITH ONE EXCEPTION

Attorneys must e-file in Lorain County. But an emergency protection order or emergency motion must be filed in person during business hours. Check the deposit and forms before you file.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Four parts: Domestic Relations (divorce and dissolution), Juvenile (unmarried parents), Probate (adoption), and how Gavvl can help. The full contents are on the next page.

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QUESTION ONE

Which court is actually handling your case?

One family can touch more than one court. In Lorain County they share the Justice Center on Court Street in Elyria. Start with the relationship, and with what you need a judge to decide.

MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED

Domestic Relations

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, spousal support, and dividing property and debt.

WHO HEARS IT

Judges Glass, Janik, and Swenski.

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Division

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

WHO HEARS IT

The same three Family Court judges.

ADOPTION

Probate Court

Stepparent, kinship, and adult adoption, plus name changes and guardianships.

WHERE

225 Court Street, Room 611.

One Family Court, plus Probate

Lorain County combines Domestic Relations and Juvenile into one Family Court, with three judges, at 225 Court Street in Elyria. Adoption is a separate Probate Court in Room 611 of the same building. Each keeps its own forms and fees, so file with the right one for your case.

PART ONE

Domestic Relations ends marriages.

If you are married, ending the marriage runs through the Domestic Relations side of the Family Court. The first real question is simple: can both spouses sign a full agreement?

WITHOUT CHILDREN	WITH CHILDREN	WHERE YOU FILE	RESIDENCY
\$350	\$675	Clerk, Room 108	6 months in Ohio

QUICK PATHFINDER

Do you agree on everything?

If yes, dissolution may fit. If no, divorce is the safer or required path. Agreement means more than wanting the case over. It means signed terms on property, debt, support, and parenting. Add child support if you have children.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses file together. They ask the court to approve a signed Separation Agreement. The court holds a hearing 30 to 90 days later. Both spouses sign the agreement again, in open court, at that final hearing.

Divorce is a lawsuit.

One spouse files against the other. Use it when you do not yet agree. Use it when you cannot find your spouse, or when you need the court to decide something.

THE DEPOSIT JUMPS WHEN CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED

A divorce, dissolution, or annulment deposit is \$350 without minor children, but \$675 with minor children. The deposit covers court costs and several court funds. Protection-order and child-support agency filings are exempt from the deposit.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution packet, step by step.

Dissolution uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms. Sign the Separation Agreement in front of a notary first. Then build the rest of the packet around it.

YOU SIGN THE AGREEMENT AGAIN IN COURT

A dissolution is fully agreed. You file together, and the court sets a hearing 30 to 90 days out. In Lorain County, both spouses sign the Separation Agreement again in open court at the final hearing and confirm they still agree.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition for Dissolution https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Both spouses sign; opens the joint case
Separation Agreement https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Your signed terms; notarize this first
Financial affidavits https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Income and property details
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the UCCJEA affidavit
Child support worksheet + IV-D https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; support math and setup
Decree of Dissolution https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	The judgment the court signs

WITH CHILDREN**Seminar and 45-day deadline**

If you have a minor child, both parents take the Separating Parents Seminar. For a dissolution, the deadline is 45 days from filing. You cannot reach the final hearing until both parents complete it.

A FASTER APPROVAL PATH WITH COUNSEL

When both spouses have lawyers, the proposed decree goes to the support magistrate, and an approval hearing is set within 14 calendar days of filing. Many dissolutions move quickly this way.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is e-filed with the Clerk and heard by the Family Court. Lorain uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms. The financial and parenting affidavits go in with the Complaint.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Divorce https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Starts the lawsuit; with or without children
Affidavit of Income and Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Notarized; filed with the Complaint
Affidavit of Property https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the UCCJEA affidavit
Rule 75(N) temporary motion https://www.lcdrc.org/	Lorain County DR forms	File if you want orders during the case

A restraining order on request

In a new divorce, either spouse can ask for a mutual restraining order. It stops both from hiding or selling assets, running up debt in the other's name, or dropping insurance while the case runs.

IF YOU CANNOT FIND YOUR SPOUSE

Service can be by publication if you cannot find the other spouse. There is a \$75 deposit for publication, and the court arranges the notice. Ask the Clerk at (440) 329-5277 about the steps.

TEMPORARY ORDERS

Getting orders while the case runs.

A divorce can take months. Temporary orders set the rules in the meantime — things like temporary support or a parenting schedule.

The 28-day rule

You file a Rule 75(N) motion for temporary support and parenting orders during the case. If you ask for an oral hearing, the court grants one within 28 days of when the temporary order is journalized.

Emergency orders

An ex parte order takes an affidavit and a bond for service. The court will not change custody on an ex parte basis without a hearing. A review hearing is held as soon as possible, no later than 10 court days.

EMERGENCIES ARE FILED IN PERSON

An emergency motion, like one for emergency temporary custody, must be filed in person during business hours, not e-filed. For protection from violence, a protection order may be the better tool, and it has no filing fee. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, the seminar, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Lorain County also requires a short seminar for parents, and it offers free ways to take it.

SOLE CUSTODY

Residential parent and legal custodian

One parent is the residential parent and legal custodian. The other parent usually has parenting time. Ohio does not use the words “full” or “primary” custody.

SHARED PARENTING

A shared parenting plan

Both parents share rights and duties under a written plan. Shared parenting is not the same as equal time. In Lorain, both parents must finish the seminar before a shared parenting plan is approved.

The Separating Parents Seminar

Every case with a minor child needs it. You can take it free in person on a Saturday morning, free online on a Monday evening, or pay about \$25 for an approved online class. The deadline is 90 days, or 45 for a dissolution.

CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA

The Lorain County child support agency handles support, with hearings run by court magistrates at (440) 326-4836. Support is collected by income withholding and paid through the state, not between parents.

THE REST OF A DIVORCE

Spousal support, property, and other paths.

Beyond custody and child support, a divorce sorts out spousal support and divides what you own and owe.

Spousal support

The court can order one spouse to support the other for a set time. Ohio weighs income, the length of the marriage, health, and other factors. There is no fixed formula.

Property and debt

Ohio divides marital property and debt fairly. Fair does not always mean a 50-50 split. Property you brought into the marriage may count as separate.

Legal separation and annulment

Both are filed on the Domestic Relations side. They use the same deposit as a divorce. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

A note on retirement accounts

If a divorce divides a retirement account or pension, it usually takes a separate order, a QDRO or a DPO, to split it with the plan. These are filed before or at the final hearing. Getting the wording right matters, so many people use a lawyer for this step.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing a Lorain County order.

Life changes after a case ends. Post-decree motions stay in the same Family Court case that issued your decree.

CHANGE CUSTODY OR SUPPORT**\$100**

To modify custody, parenting time, or child support

OTHER MOTION AFTER JUDGMENT**\$50**

To modify, revive, or vacate another order

SERVICE BY PUBLICATION**\$75**

When the other party cannot be found

Modifying and enforcing

To change custody or support, you file a motion for change of custody or child support for \$100. The case returns to your assigned judge. Support changes can also start through the agency at (440) 326-4836.

MOVING WITH THE CHILDREN

A parent who plans to move must file a relocation notice under Ohio law before moving. Ask the Domestic Relations Clerk at (440) 329-5277 which form your decree needs and how far ahead to file it.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and the parenting seminar.

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

Free mediation

The court's mediators help parents agree on parenting time, medical costs, and returning property. It is free, and self-represented parties can request it. It is never used for a domestic violence case.

Guardians ad litem

The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak to the children's best interests. Lorain also has Voices for Children, a trained volunteer advocate program, at (440) 329-5556.

The parenting seminar

The Separating Parents Seminar teaches parents how separation affects children. Two of the three ways to take it are completely free.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Two minutes to a clear next step.

Gavvl's Find My Service quiz gives you a recommendation and your payment options. Or talk with our team about full or limited-scope help in Lorain County.

Find My Service · gavvl.com/find-my-service

Get started · gavvl.com/start

Call · (844) 694-2885

Email · support@gavvl.com

PROTECTION ORDERS

When safety comes first.

A domestic violence civil protection order (DVCPO) can order someone to stay away. It can also set temporary custody and support. Your safety drives the timeline.

FILING FEE	FILE EX PARTE	FULL HEARING	FINAL ORDER
\$0 to petitioner	In person	10 court days	Up to 5 years

How it works here
 A protection order is filed under R.C. 3113.31 using the Ohio standard forms. There is no fee. An emergency ex parte petition must be filed in person, not e-filed. A victim advocate can be with you at every stage.

The hearing windows
 If the court grants an ex parte order, a full hearing is held within 10 court days. If the order tells someone to leave the home, that hearing is within 7 court days. A final order can last up to five years.

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER NOW
 If you or your children are in danger right now, call 911. A protection order is a civil court process, not an emergency response.

PART TWO

Juvenile is for parents who were never married.

Were the parents never married? Then custody, parenting time, and child support are decided on the Juvenile side of the Family Court.

Parentage comes first

In Ohio, the mother of a child born outside marriage is the only legal custodian until a court says otherwise. So a father usually has to prove he is the father first. You can do that by a signed form, through the child support agency, or by a court case.

Filing for custody as an unmarried parent

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Custody https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Sets custody and parenting time
Complaint to Establish Parentage https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	When fatherhood is not yet established
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required with a custody filing
IV-D application https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Juvenile Clerk or CSEA	Sets up the support case with the agency

FILING AND THE SEMINAR

File with the Juvenile Clerk at 225 Court Street, (440) 329-5187. A case with a minor child needs the Separating Parents Seminar too, with a 90-day deadline. Confirm the current juvenile filing deposit with the Clerk or at loraincountyohio.gov/379/Deposit-for-Costs.

AFTER A JUVENILE ORDER

Changing orders and CPS cases.

Juvenile orders can change as children grow. Some cases move fast.

Modifying a juvenile order

To change custody, parenting time, or support, you file a motion in the existing case. The case returns to the same judge. Support changes can also start through the agency at (440) 326-4836.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard on the Juvenile side. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem, often a Voices for Children volunteer, to speak for the child. For immediate danger, call 911.

A NOTE ON THE SEMINAR IN JUVENILE CASES

Parents seeking custody or visitation in Juvenile Court must also complete the Separating Parents Seminar. The court will not set a residential parent or approve shared parenting until it is done, and parenting time can be held in abeyance.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the separate Probate Court in Room 611.

Here is the basic shape of the process.

CONFIRM THE DEPOSIT

The Probate Court sets its own deposit for an adoption, which is not listed in this guide. Confirm the current amount and accepted payment with Probate at (440) 329-5175 or at loraincountyohio.gov/379/Deposit-for-Costs before you file.

1

File the petition in Probate

File the Petition for Adoption of a Minor with the child's birth certificate and, for a stepparent, the marriage certificate. Probate is at 225 Court Street, Room 611, (440) 329-5175.

2

Address consent

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

3

Complete the home study

Lorain County requires a home study for an adoption. An assessor visits and reviews the home and the family before the hearing.

4

Attend the hearing

If the court says yes, it signs a final decree of adoption. A new birth certificate is issued and the original is sealed.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Lorain County.

Gavvl is a modern Ohio family-law firm serving all 88 counties. We pair skilled lawyers with easy-to-use tech and clear pricing. You choose how much help you need.

FULL REPRESENTATION

An attorney handles the whole case

From the first consult through final orders: strategy, every filing, all court dates, and negotiating. Best for contested, complex, or high-conflict cases. Billed as a retainer plus hourly fees.

LIMITED-SCOPE (FLAT FEE)

Hire us for specific tasks

Pay a flat fee per service — drafting and filing, one hearing, advice, or document review. Best for uncontested cases and tighter budgets. Not built for high-conflict cases that need steady advocacy.

Ways to pay

Your options depend on the service model. Limited-scope work has the widest range: pay in full, Affirm, Klarna, or PayPal Pay Later. Gavvl Direct is an in-house plan with no credit check. Financed amounts carry 19% annual interest, compounded monthly. We work out your exact payment when you enroll.

START IN TWO MINUTES

Take the Find My Service quiz at gavvl.com/find-my-service. You get a recommendation and your payment options. Or call (844) 694-2885. Consultations are low-cost.

BEFORE YOU GO

Important disclosures.

Please read these notes about how to use this guide.

INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

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FEES AND PROCEDURES CHANGE

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

AWARDS AND REVIEWS

Any awards, ratings, and reviews reflect the experiences of other clients and the opinions of rating organizations. They are not a guarantee or prediction of the outcome of your case. Every case is different.

JURISDICTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

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