

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Morrow County

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

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- 01** Find the right Morrow County court — and the right clerk's window — before you fill out a single form.

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

 - 03** See the exact forms, fees, deadlines, and filing steps that trip people up in Mount Gilead — including the county's two separate clerks.

 - 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 clerk, the paperwork, and your next decision. Morrow County has one wrinkle most people miss: two different clerks take filings on different floors.

01

Married, or ending a marriage?

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, and protection orders are the Domestic Relations Division — filed with the Clerk of Courts on the 1st floor.

02

Parents who were never married?

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents are the Juvenile Division — filed with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk on the 3rd floor.

03

Adopting a stepchild or relative?

Adoption is the Probate Division — also filed with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk on the 3rd floor.

READ THIS FIRST

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Morrow 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.

MORROW COUNTY COURTS

One courthouse, two clerks, four divisions.

Every Morrow County family-law division sits in the same courthouse at 48 East High Street, Mount Gilead. The trick is matching your case to the right division — and the right clerk's window.

YOUR MATTER	DIVISION	FILE WITH (FLOOR)
Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, protection orders	Domestic Relations	Clerk of Courts 1st floor · (419) 947-2085
Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents; non-parent custody	Juvenile	Juvenile/Probate Clerk 3rd floor · (419) 947-5575
Abuse, neglect, or dependency (children services) cases	Juvenile	Juvenile/Probate Clerk 3rd floor
Stepparent and kinship adoption	Probate	Juvenile/Probate Clerk 3rd floor

MORROW COUNTY QUIRK

Two clerks, two floors — don't go to the wrong one.

The elected Clerk of Courts (1st floor) takes divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, and protection orders. The court's own Juvenile/Probate Clerk (3rd floor, at the top of the stairs) takes unmarried-parent custody, parentage, support, children-services cases, and adoption.

A SMALL-COUNTY FEATURE

The same judges hear everything.

Morrow is one of only five Ohio counties where the elected judges (Robert C. Hickson, Jr. and Tom C. Elkin) personally preside over all four divisions. Two magistrates hear most contested Domestic Relations and Juvenile matters, with a judge reviewing their decisions.

MORROW COUNTY COURTS

Child support, child safety, and filing notes.

A few things to know before you file, plus the numbers that matter most for children.

MONEY FOR THE KIDS

Child support — Morrow County CSEA

The Child Support Enforcement Agency, within Job & Family Services, sets up and enforces support and can review an order. Any divorce, dissolution, or custody case with children also needs a Title IV-D application. The statewide calculator estimates the guideline number.

HOW MORROW COUNTY TAKES FILINGS

E-file or use a public terminal — no personal checks.

Both clerks accept electronic filing through the court's e-filing system (PDF; pay by card, surcharge may apply); public filing and payment terminals sit in the Clerk's office and the lobby by the Juvenile & Probate Clerks. Personal checks are not accepted for e-filing. The courthouse screens visitors at a metal detector.

IF A CHILD MAY BE UNSAFE

Reporting abuse or neglect

Morrow County Job & Family Services investigates reports. The Ohio 24-hour hotline is 1-855-642-4453 (1-855-O-H-CHILD). If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

Divorce	\$400
Dissolution	\$275
Juvenile / adoption deposit	confirm with the court
Fee too high?	file a fee-waiver affidavit

PART ONE

Domestic Relations: the married-couple court.

If you are married and ending it, the Domestic Relations Division handles your case — filed with the Clerk of Courts on the 1st floor. It also issues protection orders. This part walks through each path in the order most people meet them.

DIVISION	WHERE	FILE WITH	PHONE
Domestic Relations	48 E. High St.	Clerk of Courts	(419) 947-2085

ONE HABIT TO REMEMBER IN EVERY DR CASE

An automatic restraining order kicks in at filing.

When you file for divorce, legal separation, or annulment in Morrow County, a mutual restraining order takes effect automatically (DR Rule 8). It bars both spouses from removing the children from the court's jurisdiction, harassing each other, or dissipating assets — protection that starts the day you file, before any hearing.

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 — which is why it costs less to file (\$275 vs. \$400).

DIVISION	FILING FEE	HEARING	SERVICE
Domestic Relations	\$275	~4–6 weeks	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 (SCOO SF 17)
Agreement	Separation Agreement (SF 19)
Decree	Decree of Dissolution (SF 18)
If minor children	Parenting plan + support worksheet
Final step	Short hearing where you both confirm the deal

A REAL MORROW COUNTY TIMELINE
 Often set about 4–6 weeks out.
 Ohio law sets the hearing 30 to 90 days after filing; Morrow County commonly schedules it around four to six weeks out. Both spouses must attend, and with children both must finish the parenting seminar first.

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 on the Ohio Supreme Court forms, with the income, property, and (with children) parenting affidavits. The Clerk's checklist lists exactly what to include, and the automatic mutual restraining order protects both sides from day one.

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). If no answer is filed within 28 days, the court can treat the divorce as uncontested and decide it on your spouse's evidence.

DIVISION	FEE	ANSWER DEADLINE	EARLIEST HEARING
Domestic Relations	\$400	28 days	42 days after service

TWO WORDS PEOPLE MIX UP
 "Uncontested" divorce is not a dissolution.
 In Morrow County, a divorce is treated as uncontested if no answer is filed within 28 days of service — the court hears it on the filing spouse's evidence (service can be by posting or publication if the other spouse can't be found). A dissolution is a fully agreed joint filing with no one served. By rule, no divorce is heard until 42 days after service.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

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

Morrow County uses the Ohio Supreme Court standardized forms for divorce and dissolution, and the Clerk publishes a checklist that tells you exactly what goes in the packet.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Divorce & Dissolution WITH Children — Clerk checklist https://morrowcountyohio.gov/Clerk%20of%20Courts/Form%20Legal/Divorce%20&%20Dissolution%20WITH%20Children%20NEW.pdf?t=202604301150020	Morrow County Clerk of Courts	The county's list of what a with-children packet must include
<p>▲ Heads up: Start here. There's also a WITHOUT-children checklist on the Clerk's page.</p>		
Complaint for Divorce With Children (SF 7) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form7.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	The pleading that starts a divorce involving minor children
Affidavit 1 — Basic Information, Income, and Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit1.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Your finances; filed with the complaint
Shared Parenting Plan / Parenting Plan (SF 20 / SF 21) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form20.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Sets the parenting arrangement when children are involved
Civil Fee Waiver Affidavit and Order https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/courtSvc/justiceAccess/resources/CivilFeeWaiver.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court	Ask the court to waive the filing deposit
All standardized DR & Juvenile forms https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court (forms index)	The full set the county directs filers to use

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

What does a Morrow County divorce look like?

Most divorces settle. The steps below are the path the court sets in motion once you file, whether or not you ever reach a trial.

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
Pretrial	about 3 months from filing
Trial (no children)	about 6–9 months
Trial (with children)	about 6–12 months

1 **File and pay (or ask to waive the fee)**
 File the complaint and affidavits with the Clerk of Courts and pay the \$400 deposit, or file a fee-waiver affidavit. The automatic mutual restraining order takes effect now.

2 **Serve your spouse**
 Service is by certified mail, sheriff, or — if an address is unknown — posting or publication. Service is checked at 30 days; if it's not done, the court sends a 14-day notice before dismissal.

3 **Temporary orders, on affidavits**
 Either spouse can ask for temporary custody, support, or use of the home; the court usually decides from the affidavits, with a right to request an oral hearing.

4 **Parenting seminar, then a pretrial**
 With children, both parents finish the Seminar for Separating Parents. A pretrial is set within about three months of filing.

5 **Settle or go to hearing**
 If uncontested, the case is set for a final hearing — bring a proposed decree. If contested, it proceeds to trial (no hearing before 42 days after service).

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 filed in the Domestic Relations Division through the Clerk of Courts.

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 residency reasons. It's litigated much like a divorce (same automatic restraining order, same 42-day rule), and can later lead to a divorce or dissolution.

Annulment (R.C. 3105.31)

A court declares a marriage was never valid on a specific ground — such as bigamy, being underage, fraud, duress, incapacity, or non-consummation. There's no Ohio standard annulment packet, so these are usually attorney-drafted; a short marriage alone is not 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. The exact filing deposit for a legal separation or annulment isn't listed separately on the published schedule — confirm it with the Clerk of Courts before filing.

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. Morrow County mostly decides them on affidavits, with a right to a hearing.

Temporary orders, on affidavits

With the complaint or answer, the parties file financial affidavits, a child-support worksheet, and a proposal for temporary orders. The court usually draws temporary orders from the affidavits, without a hearing (DR Rule 16). Either party may then request an oral hearing before the magistrate under Civ.R. 75(N).

WHEN A CHILD IS IN DANGER

Ex parte orders are tightly limited.

An emergency (ex parte) order affecting children is granted only on sworn, specific facts showing irreparable harm without immediate action, and any ex parte change of the residential parent must provide for immediate notice to the other parent.

STARTS AT FILING

The automatic restraining order.

On filing a divorce, legal separation, or annulment, the mutual restraining order issues without notice and stays in force during the case (DR Rule 8).

A protection order can also help fast.

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

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Objections and appeals: review, not a redo.

Because magistrates hear most contested matters in Morrow County, knowing how to ask a judge to review a decision — and the short deadlines for doing it — matters.

FIRST LEVEL

Objecting to a magistrate's decision

A magistrate hears most contested Domestic Relations and Juvenile matters and issues a decision the judge then reviews. You generally have 14 days to file written objections under Civ.R. 53. If you object to the facts, you must order a transcript within three days of filing your objections. Review is not a fresh trial.

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.

A Domestic Violence Civil Protection Order (R.C. 3113.31) is a civil order that can require a family or household member to stay away, leave a shared home, and stop contact, and can set temporary custody and support terms. There is never a filing fee.

How it works

File a petition on the Ohio Supreme Court protection-order forms in the Domestic Relations Division (through the Clerk of Courts). The court can issue a temporary ex parte order the same or next business day if you are in danger; a full hearing follows, generally within about 7 to 10 court days, and a final order can last up to five years.

A protection order stands on its own.

It is separate from any divorce or custody case, though it can include temporary parenting and support terms. If the person you need protection from is under 18, that order is handled by the Juvenile Division instead (R.C. 2151.34).

WHO SERVES IT

The Sheriff, and the database.

The Sheriff serves the order and enters it into the law-enforcement database (LEADS); you receive certified copies. Violating the order is a crime.

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

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)

[Ohio protection-order forms \(petition, ex parte and full order\)](#)

<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/courts/services-to-courts/domestic-violence-program/domestic-violence-protection-order-forms/>

WHERE TO GET IT

Ohio Supreme Court (DV program forms)

WHAT IT'S FOR

Asks the court to order a family or household member to stay away

⚠ Heads up: No filing fee for the petitioner. File in the Domestic Relations Division through the Clerk of Courts.

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 affidavits ask 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 move money or cancel insurance — it can violate the automatic restraining order.

PART TWO

Juvenile: when parents were never married.

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents are decided by the Juvenile Division — same courthouse and judges, but filed with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk on the 3rd floor.

DIVISION	WHERE	FILE WITH	PHONE
Juvenile	48 E. High St.	Juv./Probate Clerk	(419) 947-5575

WHY A SEPARATE DIVISION AND CLERK

Unmarried-parent custody is a Juvenile matter.

By Ohio law (R.C. 2151.23), custody, parenting time, and support for children of unmarried parents are decided in the Juvenile Division — and filed with the 3rd-floor Juvenile/Probate Clerk, not the 1st-floor Clerk of Courts. A father generally establishes parentage first, then the court allocates custody and sets support.

JUVENILE

Unmarried parents: paternity first, then custody.

This is the most common Juvenile family-law case. It happens in two steps, and a child-support application is part of it from the start.

Step one: establish parentage

Parentage is the legal parent-child link (R.C. 3111). It can be set by a signed Acknowledgment of Paternity, by a CSEA administrative order, or by a court parentage case; genetic testing may be ordered. Establishing parentage opens support — it does not by itself decide custody.

Step two: ask for custody

Once parentage is set, a parent asks the court to allocate parental rights as sole custody (one residential parent and legal custodian) or shared parenting (both parents under a plan), to set parenting time, and to order support. Ohio has no “primary” or “joint” custody.

DON'T FORGET THIS FORM

One complaint covers parentage, custody, and parenting time.

The Ohio standardized form SF 23 / JF 2 combines parentage, allocation of parental rights, and parenting time. A child-support worksheet and a Title IV-D application are part of any case with children. Morrow County targets parentage cases for completion within 12 months and custody cases within 9 months.

JUVENILE

Forms for an unmarried-parent case.

These are filed with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk on the 3rd floor. Morrow County uses the Ohio Supreme Court standardized Juvenile forms.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Parentage, Allocation & Parenting Time (SF 23 / JF 2) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form23.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Establishes parentage and asks the court to allocate custody and time
Affidavit 3 — Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit3.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Where the child has lived and any other custody cases
Shared Parenting Plan / Parenting Plan (SF 20 / SF 21) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form20.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Sets the parenting arrangement
Child Support Computation Worksheet https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html	Ohio child-support calculator	Builds the guideline support number
Court forms page (Juvenile) https://morrowcountyohio.gov/government/county_elected_officials/common_pleas_court/court_forms.php	Morrow County Common Pleas Court	The court's hub for forms and the SCOO forms link

⚠ Heads up: The Juvenile filing deposit is set by the court case-by-case (Juvenile Rule 16) — confirm the current amount with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk, (419) 947-5575.

JUVENILE

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. Morrow County publishes a detailed default schedule.

The standard schedule

Unless parents agree otherwise, Morrow County's Local Model Parenting Time Rule (DR Local Rule 2, also used by the Juvenile Division) gives the non-residential parent at least: alternating weekends (Friday 6 p.m. to Sunday 6 p.m.), one weekday evening (5–8 p.m.), a holiday rotation, and the second half of summer break. A separate long-distance schedule applies for parents more than 90 miles apart.

A boundary worth knowing.

If the parents' rights were already set in a Morrow County divorce, parenting-time changes belong in that Domestic Relations case (1st-floor clerk), not Juvenile.

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 a fit parent's wishes.

IF YOU MOVE

File a relocation notice.

A residential parent who intends to move files a Notice of Intent to Relocate (R.C. 3109.051(G)); the other parent can then ask the court to revisit parenting time.

JUVENILE

When a grandparent or relative is raising the child.

A relative or other non-parent can ask the Juvenile Division for legal custody of a child (R.C. 2151.23). 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 parents are unsuitable — abandonment, an agreement to give up custody, or that parental custody would harm the child — and that the placement serves the child's best interest.

How it works

File a sworn complaint for custody with a parenting proceeding affidavit through the Juvenile/Probate Clerk. The court may appoint a Guardian ad Litem, order a social investigation, or refer the parties to mediation first, then decides on the unsuitability and best-interest framework.

Custody is not adoption.

Legal custody leaves parents with residual rights (including consent to adoption) and can be changed later. Adoption permanently ends parental rights and goes through the Probate Division.

SHORT-OF-COURT TOOLS**POA and caretaker affidavit.**

For school and medical authority without a full custody case, the Ohio Grandparent Power of Attorney and Caretaker Authorization Affidavit are faster, revocable options when parents cooperate.

JUVENILE

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. Support runs through the Morrow County CSEA and Ohio Child Support Payment Central.

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 roughly 10% or changed-circumstances basis (the CSEA can also review it). A custody or parenting-time motion can trigger a mediation referral.

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>).

School placement isn't a custody change.

Changing a child's school district in a shared-parenting arrangement is an administrative change decided under R.C. 3109.04(E) — not, by itself, a change of custody.

JUVENILE

When Children Services is involved.

When a child may be abused, neglected, or dependent, Morrow County Job & Family Services investigates and, if needed, the Juvenile Division oversees the case. The process protects the child while working toward a safe, permanent home.

The stages, in plain order

1. A report comes in; Job & Family Services investigates.
2. If a child is removed, a shelter-care hearing is held within 72 hours.
3. Adjudication: the court decides if the child is abused, neglected, or dependent (targeted within 60 days).
4. Disposition: the court sets placement and a case plan (within 90 days).
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 represents the child's best interest throughout (no GAL deposit is required in these cases).

REPORT FIRST IF A CHILD IS AT RISK

Who to call.

Morrow County Job & Family Services investigates reports. Ohio 24-hour hotline: 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: stepparent and kinship adoption.

Adoption permanently makes an adult the legal parent of a child. In Morrow County it is the Probate Division — filed, like Juvenile cases, with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk on the 3rd floor.

DIVISION	WHERE	FILE WITH	PHONE
Probate	48 E. High St.	Juv./Probate Clerk	(419) 947-5575

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 child becomes the stepparent's legal child. A home study by a court-appointed assessor is required (stepparent cases may qualify for a streamlined assessment). The filing deposit isn't published online — confirm it with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk.

PROBATE

What a Morrow County adoption involves.

The Probate Division uses the Ohio standard adoption forms. The most common family adoptions are stepparent and kinship, and the central question is usually consent.

THE USUAL STICKING POINT

Consent is the heart of most cases. Many stepparent adoptions turn on whether the other parent's consent is required. The one-year failure-to-support-or-communicate exception is fact-specific — this is where early legal advice matters most.

A MONEY NOTE

Confirm the deposit. Morrow County doesn't publish a flat adoption fee. Confirm the current stepparent or kinship adoption deposit, and ask for the local adoption packet, with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk, (419) 947-5575.

1 **File the petition**
File the petition for adoption in the Probate Division (through the Juvenile/Probate Clerk) with the child's birth record, the marriage record in a stepparent case, and consents — or a request to proceed without a parent's consent.

2 **Consent or its exceptions**
Each living parent generally must consent (R.C. 3107.06) unless consent is excused (R.C. 3107.07) — most commonly when, without justifiable cause, a parent failed to support or communicate with the child for the year before the petition. A child 12 or older must also consent.

3 **Assessment / home study**
The court appoints an assessor for the required home study; stepparent adoptions may qualify for a streamlined assessment.

4 **Hearings**
If consent is disputed, the court first decides whether it's required; then it holds a best-interest hearing on the petition.

5 **Final decree**
The court enters the final decree of adoption, the child becomes the petitioner's legal child, and an amended birth certificate issues.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Ohio standardized probate adoption forms https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized forms)	The adoption petition, consent, and decree forms Morrow County uses

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
△ Heads up: Confirm the current adoption deposit and local packet with the Juvenile/Probate Clerk, (419) 947-5575.		
Court forms page (Probate) https://morrowcountyohio.gov/government/county_elected_officials/common_pleas_court/court_forms.php	Morrow County Common Pleas Court	The court's hub for probate and fiduciary forms
Child Support Computation Worksheet (if support is affected) https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html	Ohio child-support calculator	Used where an adoption changes a support obligation

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, 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 Morrow County, but it can't account for your situation. Reading, downloading, or contacting Gavvl Law does not create an attorney-client relationship — only a signed engagement agreement does. 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 a few Morrow County deposits (some Juvenile and adoption fees) aren't published online. The information was verified as of June 17, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees with the relevant clerk before you file.

Jurisdiction and responsibility.

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

gavvl.com/privacy-policy

(<https://gavvl.com/privacy-policy>)

READY WHEN YOU ARE.

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

We'll help you find the right court, clerk, and path for the moment.

(844) 694-2885

support@gavvl.com

gavvl.com/find-my-service

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