

## PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

# Family Law in Paulding County

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

- 
- 01** Find the right Paulding County court 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 Paulding — including the affidavits the Clerk won't file without.

---

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

---

## INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Use this guide like a map, not a law textbook.	4
Two courts, one building, in Paulding.	5
Child support, child safety, and filing notes.	6
Domestic Relations: the married-couple court.	7
Dissolution: the fully agreed way to end a marriage.	8
Divorce: are you starting it, or responding to it?	9
What do I fill out, and where do I get it?	10
What does a Paulding County divorce look like?	11
Legal separation and annulment: the other two doors.	13
Temporary orders and emergencies while you wait.	14
Objections and appeals: review, not a redo.	15
Protection orders when you are not safe.	16
Dividing property, and protecting your case.	18
Juvenile: when parents were never married.	19
Unmarried parents: paternity first, then custody.	20
Forms for an unmarried-parent case.	21
Parenting time and grandparent companionship.	22
When a grandparent or relative is raising the child.	23
Child support, and changing a Juvenile order.	24
When Children Services is involved.	25
Probate: stepparent and kinship adoption.	26
What a Paulding County adoption involves.	27
How Gavvl Law can help.	29

Ways to pay, and how to start.	30
The fine print, in plain English.	31

## 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 paperwork, and your next decision. Paulding County splits this work between two courts in the same building, so step one is knowing which one is yours.

01

## Married, or ending a marriage?

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, and protection orders are the Common Pleas Court, General Division (Judge Tiffany R. Beckman), filed with the Clerk of Courts.

02

## Parents who were never married?

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents are the Probate & Juvenile Court (Judge Harvey D. Hyman).

03

## Adopting a stepchild or relative?

Adoption is also the Probate & Juvenile Court (Judge Hyman), one floor up from the divorce court.

## READ THIS FIRST

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Paulding 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.

## PAULDING COUNTY COURTS

# Two courts, one building, in Paulding.

Paulding County family law is split between two courts that share the courthouse at 115 N. Williams Street. The trick is matching your case to the right one.

YOUR MATTER	COURT	WHERE / CONTACT
Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, protection orders	Common Pleas, General Division Judge Beckman	Suite 201 · file with the Clerk (419) 399-8210
Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents; non-parent custody	Probate & Juvenile Court Judge Hyman	Suite 202 (419) 399-8255
Abuse, neglect, or dependency (children services) cases	Probate & Juvenile Court Judge Hyman	Suite 202 (419) 399-8255
Stepparent and kinship adoption	Probate & Juvenile Court Judge Hyman	Suite 202 (419) 399-8256

#### HOW THE BUILDING WORKS

Divorce on one floor, custody and adoption nearby.

The General Division runs the divorce docket from Suite 201 (Judge Beckman), and the combined Probate & Juvenile Court sits in Suite 202 (Judge Hyman). All divorce and dissolution papers are filed with the Clerk of Courts in Room 104.

#### PAULDING COUNTY QUIRK

The Clerk rejects a divorce filing missing affidavits.

Under Local Rule 19.01, a divorce, legal separation, annulment, or dissolution must include the income and property affidavits (and, with children, the parenting and health-insurance affidavits) or the Clerk won't accept it. The forms pages ahead show exactly which ones.

## PAULDING 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 — Paulding County CSEA

The Child Support Enforcement Agency, through Job & Family Services, sets up and enforces support; the Clerk forwards support orders to the CSEA. Any case with children includes an Application for Child Support Services. The statewide calculator estimates the guideline number.

## HOW PAULDING COUNTY TAKES FILINGS

Paper or e-file — but not to start a case remotely.

Attorneys may e-file by email to the Clerk, and documents up to 30 pages may be faxed or emailed (no extra fee). But an original complaint or initial pleading may not be filed by fax or email (Local Rule 23) — those start in person. Court hours are 8:00–4:30, with a midday break on the Common Pleas side.

## IF A CHILD MAY BE UNSAFE

### Reporting abuse or neglect

Paulding County Children 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	\$400
Paternity (Juvenile)	\$138 total
Fee too high?	file to proceed in forma pauperis

## PART ONE

# Domestic Relations: the married-couple court.

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

COURT	WHERE	JUDGE	FILE WITH
General Division	Suite 201	Tiffany R. Beckman	Clerk of Courts

**ONE THING THAT HAPPENS THE DAY YOU FILE**

An automatic injunction takes effect.

When you file for divorce, legal separation, or annulment in Paulding County, a mutual preliminary injunction (Court Order No. 1) issues automatically (Local Rule 19.04). It restrains both spouses from dissipating assets and disrupting the status quo — protection that starts at filing, 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.

COURT	FILING FEE	HEARING	SERVICE
General Division	\$400	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
Parenting class	A-OK, within 75 days
Final step	Short hearing where you both confirm the deal

**A PAULDING COUNTY NOTE**  
 Dissolution costs the same as divorce here. Unlike many counties, Paulding County's dissolution deposit is \$400 — the same as a divorce. The savings in a dissolution come from avoiding a contested fight, not a lower filing fee. The hearing is set 30 to 90 days after filing.

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 with the mandatory affidavits — income/expenses and property/debt, plus the parenting and health-insurance affidavits if you have children. The Clerk rejects a filing missing them (Local Rule 19.01).

**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). You file your own income and property affidavits with the answer.

COURT	FEE	ANSWER DEADLINE	PARENTING CLASS
General Division	\$400 (+\$50 personal service)	28 days	A-OK, 75 days

**TWO WORDS PEOPLE MIX UP**  
 “Uncontested” divorce is not a dissolution.  
 An uncontested divorce is still a divorce one spouse files — it just isn't fought, often because the other spouse won't participate or can't be found. A dissolution is a fully agreed joint filing with no one served. If you and your spouse agree on everything, a dissolution is usually faster.

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

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

Paulding County uses the statewide Ohio Uniform Domestic Relations Forms. Four affidavits do most of the heavy lifting — and the first two are required in every case.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Affidavit 1 — Basic Information, Income and Expenses</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit1.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit1.pdf</a>	Ohio Supreme Court (Uniform DR form)	Your finances — required in every divorce/dissolution
<p>⚠ Heads up: The Clerk rejects a filing missing Affidavits 1 and 2 (Local Rule 19.01).</p>		
<a href="#">Affidavit 2 — Property and Debt</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit2.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit2.pdf</a>	Ohio Supreme Court (Uniform DR form)	Your property and debts — also required in every case
<a href="#">Affidavit 3 — Parenting Proceeding Affidavit</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>	Ohio Supreme Court (Uniform DR form)	Required with minor children — where they've lived, other cases
<a href="#">Complaint for Divorce With Children (SF 7)</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>	Ohio Supreme Court (Uniform DR form)	The pleading that starts a divorce involving minor children
<a href="#">Paulding County parenting-time rules (Schedule A)</a> <a href="http://www.pauldingcommonpleas.com/parenting-time-rules.html">http://www.pauldingcommonpleas.com/parenting-time-rules.html</a>	Paulding County Common Pleas	The default parenting-time schedule and long-distance schedule
<a href="#">All Ohio Uniform Domestic Relations Forms</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court (forms index)	Complaints, answers, dissolution petition, parenting plans, decrees

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

# What does a Paulding 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
A-OK class	within 75 days of filing
Financial disclosure	within 90 days of answer
Default schedule	Schedule A parenting time

**1** File with the required affidavits, and pay  
 File the complaint with Affidavits 1 and 2 (and 3 and 4 with children) and the \$400 deposit, or a motion to proceed in forma pauperis. The automatic injunction takes effect.

**2** Serve your spouse  
 Service is by certified mail by default; personal service is available for an extra \$50.

**3** Temporary orders, if you need them  
 Ask for temporary support, custody, or parenting time; ex parte relief needs an affidavit of exigent circumstances, and the other side can demand a hearing set within 28 days.

**4** A-OK class, then financial disclosure  
 With children, both parents finish the A-OK parenting class within 75 days. Full financial disclosure is due within 90 days of an answer/counterclaim.

**5** Settle or go to hearing  
 The court may refer contested parenting issues to mediation. Many cases settle; if not, a judge or magistrate decides and issues the decree.

## 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 General Division through the Clerk of Courts, with the same \$400 deposit.

## 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 personal reasons. It follows the divorce process (same affidavits, same automatic injunction), 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 without consent, fraud, duress, or incapacity. 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. Both legal separation and annulment use the same mandatory affidavits — the Clerk rejects a filing without them.

## 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. Paulding County's Local Rule 19.04 sets a clear procedure.

## Temporary orders

In a pending case, ask the court for temporary custody, parenting time, child support, or spousal support, supported by the Uniform DR affidavits. The court can act on the filings, and either party can request a hearing on the merits.

## STARTS AT FILING

### The automatic injunction.

On filing a divorce, legal separation, or annulment, a mutual preliminary injunction (Court Order No. 1) issues automatically and keeps both spouses from disrupting the status quo (Local Rule 19.04).

## WHEN A CHILD IS IN DANGER

### Ex parte needs exigent circumstances.

An emergency (ex parte) order on parental rights, support, or use of the home requires an affidavit establishing exigent circumstances. Every ex parte order tells the other party they may request a hearing, which the court sets within 28 days.

### A protection order can also help fast.

If the danger involves domestic violence, a protection order can provide immediate ex parte protection — same day if you file before 2:00 p.m. (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

The General Division uses a magistrate for many domestic-relations hearings. 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.

### Then: appeal to the Court of Appeals

To appeal a final judgment, you generally have 30 days to file a notice of appeal (the Paulding deposit for a notice of appeal is \$150). 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 General Division (through the Clerk of Courts). A separate order — a civil stalking or sexually oriented offense protection order (R.C. 2903.214) — covers someone who is not a family or household member. A full 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. The Clerk provides the form packets, but court staff cannot help complete them. If the respondent is under 18, the petition is filed in Juvenile Court instead.

### A REAL PAULDING COUNTY RULE

File before 2:00 p.m. for a same-day hearing.

Under Local Rule 24, the ex parte hearing is held the same day if the petition is filed before 2:00 p.m.; if filed after, it's heard the next business day.

Filing fee	none, ever
File before 2 p.m.	same-day ex parte hearing
File after 2 p.m.	next business day
Final order	up to 5 years

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
--------------------	-----------------	---------------

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

<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/protection-order/2>

Ohio Supreme Court (protection-order forms)

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

△ Heads up: No filing fee for the petitioner. File with the Clerk of Courts; file before 2:00 p.m. for a same-day ex parte hearing.

**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 DPRO; the Paulding deposit is \$135).

## 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 injunction.

## PART TWO

# Juvenile: when parents were never married.

Custody, parenting time, parentage, and support for unmarried parents are decided by the Probate & Juvenile Court (Judge Hyman) in Suite 202 — not the divorce court down the hall.

COURT	WHERE	JUDGE	PHONE
Probate & Juvenile	Suite 202	Harvey D. Hyman	(419) 399-8255

#### WHY A SEPARATE COURT

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 Court. A father generally establishes parentage first, then the court allocates custody and sets support. Custody for married or formerly married parents is decided in the divorce case instead.

## JUVENILE

# Unmarried parents: paternity first, then custody.

This is the most common Juvenile family-law case. It happens in two steps, and support is set through the court and the CSEA.

## 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 CSEA genetic testing, or by a juvenile-court parentage case. 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.

### WHAT A PATERNITY CASE COSTS

**\$138 total to file, with online payment available.**

A Juvenile paternity case is a \$100 filing fee plus \$25 court costs and a \$13 computer fund. A fee waiver is available on a poverty affidavit, and the Juvenile Court accepts payments online.

## JUVENILE

# Forms for an unmarried-parent case.

Paulding County's Juvenile Court uses the Ohio Supreme Court standardized Domestic Relations and Juvenile forms.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Complaint for Parentage, Allocation &amp; Parenting Time (SF 23 / JF 2)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form23.pdf">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form23.pdf</a>	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Establishes parentage and asks the court to allocate custody and time
<a href="#">Parenting Proceeding Affidavit (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>	Ohio Supreme Court (standardized form)	Where the child has lived and any other custody cases
<a href="#">Child Support Computation Worksheet</a> <a href="https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html">https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html</a>	Ohio child-support calculator	Builds the guideline support number
<a href="#">All standardized DR &amp; Juvenile forms</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Ohio Supreme Court (forms index)	The full set the Juvenile Court directs filers to use

△ Heads up: A fee waiver is available on a poverty affidavit; the Juvenile Court also accepts payments online.

## 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. They are not the same thing.

## The county's standard schedule

Paulding County's Standard Rules for Parenting Time (Schedule A) set the default for divorcing parents: alternating weekends (Friday 5 p.m. to Sunday 5 p.m.), one weeknight (Wednesday by default, 5–8 p.m.), a holiday rotation, and six weeks of summer parenting time. A separate long-distance schedule applies for parents over 150 miles apart.

## A boundary worth knowing.

Parenting time for married or divorcing parents is set in the divorce case (General Division), not the Juvenile Court.

## Grandparent and relative companionship

Non-parents do not have automatic rights. A grandparent or relative may seek companionship in qualifying situations — for example, when the parents are unmarried or a parent has died (R.C. 3109.11, 3109.12). The court weighs the child's best interest and a fit parent's wishes.

## IF YOU MOVE

There are relocation rules.

A residential parent must follow R.C. 3109.051(G) before moving, and neither parent may change the child's school district without the other's written agreement or a court order.

## JUVENILE

# When a grandparent or relative is raising the child.

A relative or other suitable adult can ask the Juvenile Court for legal custody of a child when neither parent can appropriately care for them (R.C. 2151.23). It gives day-to-day custody while parents keep certain rights. It is not adoption.

## Legal custody vs. the alternatives

Legal custody to a non-parent leaves parental rights intact and can be changed later; the court decides on the child's best interest and may order a home study or appoint a Guardian ad Litem. Adoption (Probate) permanently ends parental rights, and guardianship is a separate Probate matter.

## How it works

File a complaint or motion for legal custody in the Juvenile Court, or ask to join an existing juvenile case. If a child is alleged abused, neglected, or dependent, custody may be addressed within a Children Services case instead.

## A short-term option.

A relative caring for a child may use a Caretaker Authorization Affidavit (R.C. 3109.65) for school and medical decisions without a custody case — confirm current use with the court.

## A FEE NOTE

### Confirm the current amount.

A new custody matter is generally charged like the paternity line (\$138 total) — confirm the current fee with the Juvenile Court. A fee waiver is available on a poverty affidavit.

## 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 Juvenile Court and the CSEA.

## Changing an order

Custody changes need a real change in circumstances plus the child's best interest (R.C. 3109.04); parenting-time changes use the best-interest standard; support changes on a qualifying change (the CSEA can also review it). A post-decree motion is \$50 simple, or \$100 with sheriff service.

## 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)

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

## When a support change takes effect.

A child-support modification is generally effective the date the motion is filed, unless the court orders otherwise.

## JUVENILE

# When Children Services is involved.

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

## The stages, in plain order

1. A report comes in; Children Services investigates.
2. If a child is removed, a shelter-care hearing happens promptly.
3. Adjudication: the court decides if the child is abused, neglected, or dependent.
4. Disposition: the court sets placement (which can be a relative) and a case plan.
5. Reviews follow until there is a lasting, safe outcome.

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

Parents have the right to counsel, appointed if you can't afford one, and a Guardian ad Litem represents the child. The Juvenile Court also runs diversion, literacy, and Parent Project programs.

## REPORT FIRST IF A CHILD IS AT RISK

### Who to call.

Paulding County Children 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 Paulding County it is the Probate Court (Judge Hyman) in Suite 202 — the same office as the Juvenile Court.

COURT	WHERE	STEPPARENT ADOPTION	ADULT ADOPTION
Probate Court	Suite 202	\$700	\$250

**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 or pre-finalization assessment is generally required (stepparent cases may be streamlined), and a new birth record issues after the final decree.

## PROBATE

# What a Paulding County adoption involves.

The Probate Court uses the Ohio standard adoption forms and posts its own forms page. 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 failure-to-support-or-communicate exception is fact-specific — this is where early legal advice matters most.

**WHAT IT COSTS**

Fees by adoption type.

Stepparent adoption is \$700; agency \$450; private, foreign, or pre-placement \$1,000; adult adoption \$250. A related name change is \$175.

- 1** **File the petition**  
File the Petition for Adoption in the Probate Court (Suite 202) with the child's birth record and the required consents.
- 2** **Consent or its exceptions**  
A birth parent's consent is generally required unless the court finds it is not required — for example, under R.C. 3107.07, when a parent failed to support or communicate with the child for the statutory period.
- 3** **Assessment / home study**  
A home study or pre-finalization assessment is generally required; stepparent cases may be streamlined.
- 4** **Best-interest hearing**  
The court holds a hearing and finds whether the adoption is in the child's best interest.
- 5** **Final decree**  
The court enters the final decree of adoption, the child becomes the petitioner's legal child, and a new birth record issues.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="https://www.pauldingjuvenilecourt.com/probate-court-forms/">Paulding County Probate Court forms</a> <a href="https://www.pauldingjuvenilecourt.com/probate-court-forms/">https://www.pauldingjuvenilecourt.com/probate-court-forms/</a>	Paulding County Probate Court	The court's own adoption, name-change, and guardianship forms
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/probate/5">Ohio standardized probate adoption forms</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/probate/5">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/probate/5</a>	Ohio Supreme Court (probate forms)	The statewide adoption petition, consent, and decree forms
<a href="https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html">Child Support Computation Worksheet (if support is affected)</a> <a href="https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html">https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html</a>	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](mailto: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 Paulding 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. The information was verified as of June 16, 2026 from official court sources. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the relevant Paulding County court before you file.

## Jurisdiction and responsibility.

Gavvl Law attorneys are licensed to practice law in Ohio. This guide describes Ohio law and Paulding 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)

(<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 and the level of help that fits.

(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