

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Putnam County

A plain-English map to divorce, dissolution, custody, support, protection orders, and adoption in Putnam 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 Putnam County court before you fill out a single form.

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

 - 03** See the exact forms, fees, and deadlines that trip people up in Ottawa — including the parenting-class clock that can sink a case.

 - 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 paperwork, and your next decision. Putnam County runs two judges and a set of strict local deadlines — so step one is knowing which court is yours.

01

Married, or ending a marriage?

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, and protection orders are the Common Pleas Court, Domestic Relations Division (Judge Keith Schierloh), filed with the Clerk of Courts.

02

Parents who were never married?

Custody, parenting time, and parentage for unmarried parents are generally the Juvenile/Probate Court (Judge Michael Borer); paternity can also start at the CSEA.

03

Adopting a stepchild or relative?

Adoption is the Juvenile/Probate Court (Judge Borer) — the same combined court that handles children-services cases.

READ THIS FIRST

This guide is information, not legal advice.

It explains how things generally work in Putnam 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.

PUTNAM COUNTY COURTS

Two judges, and a clear division of labor.

Putnam County's single Court of Common Pleas runs two family-law courts at the county complex in Ottawa, under two judges. The trick is matching your case to the right one.

YOUR MATTER	COURT	WHERE / CONTACT
Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, protection orders	Common Pleas, DR Division Judge Schierloh	Clerk of Courts (419) 523-3110
Custody, parenting time, and parentage for unmarried parents; non-parent custody	Juvenile/Probate Court Judge Borer	(419) 523-3012
Abuse, neglect, or dependency (children services) cases	Juvenile/Probate Court Judge Borer	(419) 523-3012
Stepparent and kinship adoption	Juvenile/Probate Court Judge Borer	(419) 523-3012

HOW THE COURTS WORK

Married goes to one judge; never-married usually goes to the other.

Judge Schierloh's Domestic Relations Division handles divorce, dissolution, and the custody and support that ride along with them. Judge Borer's combined Juvenile/Probate Court handles custody for unmarried parents, children-services cases, and adoption. The DR Division also advertises "child-custody disputes," so confirm the division for a never-married case.

PUTNAM COUNTY DEADLINE TO KNOW

The parenting class has a 60-day clock.

In any case with children, both parents must complete the A-OK parenting class within 60 days of filing. Miss it and you can't be granted an allocation of parental rights; if no party completes it, the case is dismissed (Local Rule 41). There's an in-person and a court-accepted online option.

PUTNAM 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 — Putnam County CSEA
 The CSEA, 567-376-3780, can establish paternity (with free genetic testing), set support, and administratively review an order. Payments run through Ohio Child Support Payment Central (a 2% processing fee applies). The statewide calculator estimates the guideline number.

HOW PUTNAM COUNTY TAKES FILINGS

File with the Clerk; fax/email filing is allowed.
 File with the Clerk of Courts (245 E. Main St., Ottawa), open 8:30–4:30. Pleadings may be faxed to 419-523-5284 or emailed to cpefile@putnamcountyohio.gov (no more than 20 pages) for \$3 per transmission plus \$1 per page.

IF A CHILD MAY BE UNSAFE

Reporting abuse or neglect
 Putnam County Job & Family Services investigates reports; call 567-376-3777. If a child is in immediate danger, call 911. (Confirm the current after-hours line with PCJFS.)

Divorce / dissolution	\$300
Special-project fund	\$50
GAL deposit	\$800 / \$400 (CASA)
Fee too high?	file a poverty affidavit

PART ONE

Domestic Relations: the married-couple court.

If you are married and ending it, Judge Schierloh's Domestic Relations Division 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	JUDGE	DIVORCE FEE	FINAL HEARING
DR Division	Keith Schierloh	\$300	within 90 days

ONE THING THAT SURPRISES PEOPLE IN PUTNAM COUNTY

Filing a divorce automatically restrains both spouses.

Under Local Rule 16, a Temporary Standard Order takes effect the moment a divorce is filed and served: neither spouse may remove the children from the court's jurisdiction, harass the other, or dissipate property. The Clerk attaches it to the summons. And if you need temporary support or a parenting schedule, the court sets that request for hearing within 14 days.

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 WINDOW	SERVICE
DR Division	\$300	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.

A Putnam-specific filing rule.
 If only one spouse has a lawyer, the other (unrepresented) spouse must file a written waiver of representation (Local Rule 16). It's a small step that's easy to miss and can delay your hearing.

Core filing	Petition for Dissolution (SCOO 17)
Agreement	Separation Agreement (SCOO 19)
Decree	Decree of Dissolution (SCOO 18)
If minor children	Parenting plan + A-OK class
Final step	Hearing where you both confirm the deal

THE STATUTORY TIMELINE
 Hearing 30 to 90 days after filing.
 Ohio law sets the dissolution hearing not less than 30 nor more than 90 days after filing, and Putnam targets a final hearing within 90 days. Both spouses attend and affirm the agreement.

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 must have lived in Ohio at least six months. You prepare the Complaint for Divorce on Putnam County's own form, with the parenting affidavit (if you have children) and the statewide income and property affidavits, and file with the Clerk of Courts.

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). Missing it can let the case proceed without your input.

COURT

DR Division

RESIDENCY

6 months in Ohio

ANSWER DEADLINE

28 days

PARENTING CLASS

within 60 days

TWO WORDS PEOPLE MIX UP

“Uncontested” divorce is not a dissolution.

An uncontested divorce is still a divorce one spouse files — it just proceeds default-style because the other spouse can't be found or won't take part, with service by posting or publication. A dissolution is a fully agreed joint filing with no one served. If you and your spouse agree on everything up front, a dissolution is usually faster and cheaper.

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

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

Putnam County publishes its own divorce and dissolution forms, and uses the Ohio Supreme Court Uniform affidavits for finances. There's also free help for people doing it themselves.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Divorce (the county's form) https://putnamcountyohio.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Complaint-for-Divorce.pdf	Putnam County Common Pleas	The pleading that starts a divorce
<p>△ Heads up: Pair it with the statewide income and property affidavits, and — with children — the county's Parenting Affidavit.</p>		
Parenting Affidavit (the county's R.C. 3109.27 / UCCJEA form) https://putnamcountyohio.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Parenting-Affidavit.pdf	Putnam County Common Pleas	Required with minor children — where they've lived, other cases
Answer of Defendant in Divorce https://putnamcountyohio.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Answer-of-Defendant-in-Divorce.pdf	Putnam County Common Pleas	How the served spouse responds (there's an Answer-and-Counterclaim too)
Affidavit 1 — Income and Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Affidavit1.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (Uniform DR form)	Your finances; filed with the complaint
All Putnam County DR forms https://putnamcountyohio.gov/courts/common-pleas-court/	Putnam County Common Pleas	The county's full self-help set (behind “Domestic Relations Forms”)
<p>△ Heads up: If you can't afford the deposit, file the county's poverty-affidavit motion instead.</p>		

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

What does a Putnam 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.

Temp-orders hearing	within 14 days
Parenting class	within 60 days
Final hearing	within 90 days
Move >75 miles?	15 days' notice

1 **File with the affidavits and deposit**
 Confirm the six-month Ohio residency, file the complaint with the parenting and finance affidavits and the \$300 deposit, or a poverty affidavit. The Temporary Standard Order takes effect on filing.

2 **Serve your spouse**
 By certified mail, then sheriff or process server; or by posting or publication if your spouse can't be found.

3 **Temporary orders, on a 14-day clock**
 Request interim support or a parenting schedule; Putnam sets the hearing within 14 days of filing, with only one 7-day continuance allowed.

4 **Parenting class within 60 days**
 With children, both parents complete the A-OK class within 60 days of filing — in person or through the court-accepted online provider — or lose eligibility for an allocation of parental rights.

5 **Settle or go to hearing**
 The court targets a final hearing within 90 days of completed service. Many cases resolve; if not, the court decides and signs 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 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 personal reasons. It mirrors a divorce in structure, and you can later file a divorce or dissolution to end the marriage. The A-OK class applies if there are minor children.

Annulment (R.C. 3105.31)

A court declares a marriage was never valid on a specific ground — such as bigamy, being underage, fraud, force, mental incapacity, or non-consummation. A short marriage is not, by itself, a ground; annulments are usually attorney-drafted because the proof is technical.

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 civil-complaint deposit is \$250; confirm the specific legal-separation or annulment amount with the Clerk, since the schedule lists divorce and dissolution at \$300.

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. Putnam County's timing rules are tight, so calendar them carefully.

Temporary orders on a 14-day clock

File a request with the Rule 16 affidavit (the parties' and children's details, wages, and child-care costs). Putnam sets the hearing within 14 days of filing, and allows only one 7-day continuance — no further delays. The order lasts until the final decree replaces it.

WHEN A CHILD IS IN DANGER

Ex parte orders are for genuine emergencies.

The court can issue an ex parte order — decided without the other side present first — only when an affidavit shows an immediate risk of harm, under Civ.R. 75. Otherwise no ex parte order issues.

The standard order is already in place.

Remember the Temporary Standard Order restrains both spouses from the moment a divorce is filed and served (no removing the children, no harassment, no dissipating property).

No marriage case? Different door.

If the parents were never married, an emergency custody request belongs in the Juvenile/Probate Court; if the danger is family violence, a protection order may fit (next pages).

DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Objections and appeals: review, not a redo.

If a magistrate decides part of your case, or the 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 Domestic Relations Division can refer matters to a magistrate. 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 the magistrate's decision — 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 (App.R. 4); Putnam County is in the Third District. 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 at the Court of Common Pleas, through the Clerk of Courts. The court can issue a temporary ex parte order the same day if you are in danger; a full hearing follows, generally within about 7 to 10 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. Mediation is never used to set protection-order terms, and violating the order can lead to arrest. Crime Victim Services is a regional resource for Putnam County.

A PUTNAM COUNTY NOTE

Two related orders, two statutes.

A civil stalking protection order (R.C. 2903.214) — for someone who is not a family or household member — is also filed at Common Pleas. If the respondent is under 18, the petition goes to the Juvenile/Probate Court instead.

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

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
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[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. Confirm whether Putnam uses a local petition packet with the Clerk, (419) 523-3110.

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 once a case is filed.

PART TWO

Juvenile: when parents were never married.

Custody, parenting time, and parentage for unmarried parents are generally decided by Judge Borer's Juvenile/Probate Court — not the divorce court — and paternity can start at the CSEA.

COURT	JUDGE	PATERNITY	PHONE
Juvenile/Probate	Michael Borer	CSEA or court	(419) 523-3012

WHY A SEPARATE COURT

Unmarried-parent custody is usually a Juvenile matter.

Under Ohio law (R.C. 2151.23), custody, parenting time, and support for children of unmarried parents are generally decided in the Juvenile Court. A father establishes parentage first, then the court allocates custody and sets support. Because Putnam's DR Division advertises “child-custody disputes,” confirm the filing division for a given never-married case.

JUVENILE

Unmarried parents: parentage first, then custody.

This is the most common Juvenile family-law case. It happens in two steps, and paternity can be free through the CSEA.

Step one: establish parentage

Parentage is the legal parent-child link (R.C. 3111). Set it by a signed Acknowledgment of Paternity (final after 60 days unless rescinded), by a CSEA administrative order with free genetic testing, 567-376-3780, or by a judicial action in the Juvenile Division. Parentage opens support; it does not by itself decide custody.

Step two: ask for custody

The court then allocates parental rights as sole custody (one residential parent and legal custodian) or shared parenting (both parents under a plan), sets parenting time using the Rule 28 schedule, and orders support. Ohio has no “primary” or “joint” custody.

FREE PATERNITY HELP

The CSEA can establish paternity at no cost.

The Putnam County CSEA, 567-376-3780, offers free genetic testing and can establish support administratively. A Title IV-D application opens CSEA services. Confirm judicial-parentage filing fees with the Juvenile/Probate Court, (419) 523-3012.

JUVENILE

Forms for an unmarried-parent case.

Parentage and allocation cases use the Ohio Supreme Court standardized forms, with paternity available administratively through the CSEA.

FORM (TAP TO OPEN)	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Parentage, Allocation & Parenting Time (SCOO 23) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/CFC/DRForms/Form23.pdf	Ohio Supreme Court (Uniform form)	Establishes parentage and asks the court to allocate custody and time
Child Support Computation Worksheet https://ohiochildsupportcalculator.ohio.gov/home.html	Ohio child-support calculator	Builds the guideline support number
All standardized DR & Juvenile forms https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court (forms index)	Parenting plans, judgment entries, and change motions

△ Heads up: Confirm the Juvenile/Probate Court's local forms and fees at (419) 523-3012; CSEA paternity services are free to the applicant.

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. Putnam County publishes a detailed default schedule.

The county's Rule 28 standard schedule

Unless parents agree otherwise, Putnam's Rule 28 order sets the default: one weekday evening (Wednesday, 5:30–8:30 p.m.), alternating weekends (Friday 7 p.m. to Sunday 7 p.m.), six weeks of summer parenting time in two-week increments, and an even-year / odd-year holiday rotation. A separate long-distance plan applies when parents live more than 150 miles apart.

A boundary worth knowing.

Parenting time for married or divorcing parents is set in the DR Division case; for never-married parents it's set in the Juvenile/Probate 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's a 75-mile notice rule.

In a DR case, a residential parent who intends to move more than 75 miles from the county seat must give 15 days' advance written notice; the other parent can then ask the court to review parenting time.

JUVENILE

When a grandparent or relative is raising the child.

A relative or other suitable adult can ask the Juvenile/Probate 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.

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 — before the court awards legal custody to the non-parent.

Custody is not adoption.

Legal custody leaves parents with residual rights (including parenting time and the duty to support) and can be changed later. Adoption permanently ends parental rights and is a Probate matter.

Short-of-court tools

For a temporary, cooperative arrangement, Ohio's standalone Grandparent Power of Attorney and Caretaker Authorization Affidavit let a relative handle school and medical decisions without a custody case — but they are limited and are not a custody order.

A NOTE ON THE GAL**A guardian for the child.**

In a contested custody case, the court may appoint a Guardian ad Litem; the deposit is \$800 for an attorney GAL or \$400 for a CASA volunteer, and the court can reallocate or waive it.

JUVENILE

Child support, and changing an order.

Ohio builds child support from both parents' incomes, and an order can be changed when life changes — in court or through the CSEA.

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 collects and disburses through 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); parenting-time changes use the best-interest standard; support changes on a qualifying change. Both parties must attend A-OK again on a custody-modification, unless completed in the last three years.

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>).

The CSEA can review support, too.

The CSEA can administratively review an order when the criteria are met — for example, 36 months since the last review, or a verified 30% income change.

JUVENILE

When Children Services is involved.

When a child may be abused, neglected, or dependent, Putnam County Job & Family Services investigates and, if needed, files a case in Judge Borer's Juvenile/Probate Court. The process protects the child while working toward a safe, permanent home.

The stages, in plain order

1. A report comes in; PCJFS screens and 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 and a permanency plan follow until there is a lasting outcome.

You may have a lawyer; the child has an advocate.

Parents have the right to counsel, appointed if you can't afford one, and the court uses Guardian ad Litem and CASA volunteers to advocate for the child's best interest.

REPORT FIRST IF A CHILD IS AT RISK

Who to call.

Putnam County Job & Family Services:
567-376-3777. 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 free Pro Se Clinic 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 Putnam County it is the Probate side of Judge Borer's combined Juvenile/Probate Court — not the Domestic Relations Division that handles divorces.

COURT	JUDGE	COURT COSTS	CONSENT
Probate (Juv./Prob.)	Michael Borer	confirm	R.C. 3107.06–.07

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 is required for minor adoptions (often reduced for stepparent cases), and a new birth record issues at the end. Resolve any related custody status before filing the adoption.

PROBATE

What a Putnam County adoption involves.

The Probate Division uses the Ohio standardized 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 failure-to-support-or-communicate exception is fact-specific — this is where early legal advice matters most.

CONFIRM BEFORE YOU FILE

The Probate forms and fee aren't reproduced here.

Adoption uses the Ohio standardized probate forms (the Form 18 series). Confirm the Juvenile/Probate Court's local adoption forms, packet, home-study process, and filing fee at (419) 523-3012 before filing.

- 1 File the petition**
File a petition for adoption in the Probate Division (part of the Juvenile/Probate Court) with the child's birth record, any consents, and required affidavits.
- 2 Consent or its exceptions**
The other legal parent generally must consent (R.C. 3107.06). Consent can be excused (R.C. 3107.07) where, for example, a parent failed without justifiable cause to support or communicate with the child for at least one year.
- 3 Assessment / home study**
A home study or assessment is typically required for minor adoptions, and is often reduced for stepparent adoptions; the court sets the requirements.
- 4 Hearing**
The court reviews consent, the assessment, and the child's best interest, including any contested-consent question.
- 5 Final decree and new birth record**
The court issues the final decree of adoption when requirements are met, and a new birth record follows.

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/probate/5	Ohio Supreme Court (probate forms)	The adoption petition, consent, and decree forms (Form 18 series)
⚠ Heads up: Confirm the Putnam Juvenile/Probate Court's local forms and filing fee at (419) 523-3012 before filing.		
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.

DOING IT YOURSELF? PUTNAM HAS FREE HELP.

The Pro Se Clinic.

Putnam County runs a Pro Se Clinic — an instructional session on divorce, dissolution, and custody, offered with Legal Aid of Western Ohio. It's educational (not legal representation), and you can schedule it at 419-523-6200. It pairs well with limited-scope help on the trickier parts of your case.

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 Putnam County, but it can't account for your situation. Reading or contacting Gavvl Law does not create an attorney-client relationship — only a signed engagement agreement does. For advice about your 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 and procedures change, and some Putnam County items (the Juvenile/Probate adoption forms and fees) aren't reproduced here. Verified as of June 15, 2026 from official court sources; always confirm current fees with the relevant court before filing.

Jurisdiction and responsibility.

Gavvl Law attorneys are licensed to practice law in Ohio. This guide describes Ohio law and Putnam 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 and the level of help that fits.

(844) 694-2885

support@gavvl.com

gavvl.com/find-my-service

1677 Old Henderson Road, Columbus, OH 43220