

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Richland County

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

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- 01** See how Richland County splits family law across its courts.

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

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

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

START HERE

Use this guide like a map, not a rulebook.

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

01

Which court handles this?

Here is the twist. The Domestic Relations Court handles divorce, dissolution, and all custody, even for unmarried parents. The Juvenile Court handles abuse cases. Adoption goes to the Probate Court.

02

Do we agree, or is there a fight?

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

03

What should I gather first?

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

THIS GUIDE IS INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

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

CUSTODY STARTS IN THE DR COURT HERE

Most counties send an unmarried parent's custody case to Juvenile Court. Richland sends it to the Domestic Relations Court instead. The Juvenile Court here handles abuse and neglect.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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

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QUESTION ONE

Which court is actually handling your case?

Richland County splits family law in a way that surprises people. Start with what you need a judge to decide, and note where custody for unmarried parents goes.

DIVORCE AND ALL CUSTODY

Domestic Relations Court

Divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, spousal support, parentage, and custody — including for unmarried parents.

WHERE

50 Park Ave. E., 3rd Fl. (419)
774-5573.

CHILD PROTECTION

Juvenile Court

Abuse, neglect, and dependency cases, plus juvenile delinquency. Not the place for an unmarried parent's custody case.

AGENCY

RCCS hotline (419)
774-4100.

ADOPTION

Probate Court

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

NOTE

Confirm current details with the court.

The key difference

In most counties, an unmarried parent files for custody in the Juvenile Court. In Richland County, that goes to the Domestic Relations Court instead, before Judge Beth Owens. The Juvenile Court here is for abuse and neglect.

PART ONE

The Domestic Relations Court ends marriages.

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

ALL DR COMPLAINTS	CUSTODY CHANGE	WHERE YOU FILE	RESIDENCY
\$450	\$300	DR Court	6 months in Ohio

QUICK PATHFINDER

Do you agree on everything?

If yes, dissolution may fit. If no, divorce is the safer or required path. Agreement means more than wanting the case over. It means signed terms on property, debt, support, and parenting. The deposit is the same either way.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses file together as co-petitioners. They ask the court to approve a signed Separation Agreement. The court holds a hearing 30 to 90 days later. Both spouses must appear and confirm the agreement.

Divorce is a lawsuit.

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

ONE FLAT DEPOSIT

A divorce, dissolution, legal separation, annulment, paternity, or custody complaint each costs \$450 to file. A motion to change an existing custody order is \$300. You can ask the court to waive the deposit with Form 01.00. One spouse must have lived in Ohio six months.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution packet, step by step.

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

FILE JOINTLY, THEN ATTEND THE HEARING

Both spouses file the joint petition with the Separation Agreement. The hearing is 30 to 90 days out, and both spouses must appear. If you have minor children, both parents must finish the Successful Co-Parenting class before the decree.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition for Dissolution (SF 17) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Both spouses sign; opens the joint case
Separation Agreement (SF 19) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Your signed terms; notarize this first
Financial Affidavit (Form 05.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	Each spouse's income and property
Parenting plan (SF 20 or 21) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; shared or sole plan
Parenting Proceeding (Form 06.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	With children; the custody affidavit
Case Designation (Form 21.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	Local cover sheet filed with the case

REQUIRED**Successful Co-Parenting**

In any case with children, both parents take this seminar. For a dissolution, the court mails the class information within 15 days of filing. The court will not finish the case until both certificates are filed.

CONFIRM THE CLASS DETAILS

The provider, cost, format, and length of the Successful Co-Parenting program are not listed on the county page, so confirm them with the DR Court at (419) 774-5573 or the program handout.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed in the Domestic Relations Court through the Clerk of Courts.

Richland uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms plus a few local ones, and you can e-file or pay online.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Divorce https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Starts the lawsuit; with or without children
Financial Affidavit (Form 05.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	Your income and property
Parenting Proceeding (Form 06.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	With children; the custody affidavit
Proposal for Temporary Orders (Form 04.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	File if you want orders during the case
Personal Identifiers (Form 20.00) https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms	Richland DR forms	Filed with the case, kept private

Filing and paying

You can e-file through the Clerk's CourtView system and pay online through PayGov. The court warns against third-party payment apps, since it cannot guarantee a payment made through one of those.

DON'T FORGET THE CLASS

A divorce with children requires the Successful Co-Parenting seminar. The court mails the information within 30 days after service. File your certificate before the final hearing.

TEMPORARY ORDERS

Getting orders while the case runs.

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

How you ask

You file a Proposal for Temporary Orders, Form 04.00, with your Financial Affidavit, Form 05.00. The court uses these and the standard Affidavit 5 to set temporary support, parenting time, and use of the home.

Emergency custody

For an emergency, you file a motion with an affidavit showing the child faces an immediate risk of harm. The court can issue a same-day ex parte order and set a prompt follow-up hearing. Use the court's Ex Parte Custody checklist.

CONFIRM THE RESPONSE TIMING

A standard temporary order is decided after the other side has a chance to respond. The county page does not state the exact number of days to respond, so confirm that timing with the Clerk. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, parenting time, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. In Richland County, all of this runs through the Domestic Relations Court, married or not.

SOLE CUSTODY

Residential parent and legal custodian

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

SHARED PARENTING

A shared parenting plan

Both parents share rights and duties under a written plan. Shared parenting is not the same as equal time. The schedule is whatever the plan or order says.

Unmarried parents file here too

When parents were never married, parentage and custody are filed in the Domestic Relations Court, not the Juvenile Court. A Complaint for Paternity or for custody each costs \$450 to file.

CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA

The county child support agency handles support, and it schedules cases at the DR Court through Rhiannon Wright at (419) 774-5692. Support is set under Ohio's guidelines and paid through the state.

THE REST OF A DIVORCE

Spousal support, property, and other paths.

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

Spousal support

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

Property and debt

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

Legal separation and annulment

Both are filed in the Domestic Relations Court for the same \$450 deposit. Legal separation sets terms without ending the marriage. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

A note on dividing retirement

If a divorce divides a pension or retirement account, it usually takes a separate order to split it with the plan. Getting the wording right matters, and a mistake can cost real money later, so many people use a lawyer for this step.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing a Richland County order.

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

REALLOCATE CUSTODY**\$300**

To change the residential parent or custody

CONTEMPT MOTION**\$300**

To enforce an order the other party broke

NOTICE OF INTENT TO RELOCATE**\$20**

To tell the court a parent plans to move

Modifying and enforcing

To change custody, you file a motion to reallocate for \$300. To change parenting time, the motion is also \$300. Support changes can also start through the county child support agency.

MOVING WITH THE CHILDREN

A parent who plans to move files a Notice of Intent to Relocate, which costs \$20. File it ahead of time and follow Ohio's notice rules so your parenting time is not disrupted.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and the class.

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

Mediation

The DR Court offers mediation with mediator Sarah Freundlich, scheduled through Jeni See at (419) 774-5575. It is never used for a domestic violence case or to decide a protection order.

Guardians ad litem

The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to look into the children's needs and speak to their best interests in a contested case.

Successful Co-Parenting

This seminar is required for parents in any case with children. The court will not enter a final judgment until both parents complete it or are excused for good cause.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

Two minutes to a clear next step.

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

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

Get started · gavvl.com/start

Call · (844) 694-2885

Email · support@gavvl.com

PROTECTION ORDERS

When safety comes first.

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

FILING FEE	FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD	EX PARTE ORDER	FULL HEARING
\$0 to petitioner	DR Court	Same day	About 7–10 days

How it works here

A protection order against a family or household member is filed in the Domestic Relations Court under R.C. 3113.31, with no fee. The court can issue a same-day ex parte order, then hold a full hearing in about 7 to 10 days.

Stalking is different

A protection order against someone who is not a family or household member is a civil stalking order, filed in the General Division instead. Protection-order records are kept off the public online portal.

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER NOW

If you or your children are in danger right now, call 911. A protection order is a civil court process, not an emergency response. A final order can last up to five years.

PART TWO

What the Juvenile Court does — and does not — do.

This is where Richland County surprises people. Custody for unmarried parents is not here. The Juvenile Court is for child protection and delinquency.

Custody for unmarried parents goes to the DR Court
 Never married, and need custody or parenting time? You file in the Domestic Relations Court, covered in Part One. You do not file in the Juvenile Court. A paternity case and a custody case each cost \$450 there.

Proving who the father is

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Acknowledgment of Paternity <small>https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</small>	Signed at birth or later	Establishes legal fatherhood by agreement
Complaint for Paternity <small>https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms</small>	Filed in the DR Court	The court route to establish fatherhood
Complaint for Custody <small>https://www.richlandcountyoh.gov/departments/domesticrelations/domesticforms</small>	Filed in the DR Court	Allocates parental rights; costs \$450
Child support worksheet <small>https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</small>	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required when support is at issue

SO WHAT IS THE JUVENILE COURT FOR?
 So what is the Juvenile Court for? It handles abuse and neglect cases, and youth crime. It is a separate court. Confirm its contacts and filing fees with the court, since they are not listed here.

CHILD PROTECTION

Abuse, neglect, and dependency cases.

When a child may not be safe, the county agency steps in and the case is heard in the Juvenile Court.

How these cases start

Richland County Children Services looks into reports of abuse or neglect. If the court needs to step in, the agency files a case in the Juvenile Court. The court can order help or a change of custody.

Reporting and help

To report concerns about a child's safety, call the Richland County Children Services 24-hour hotline at (419) 774-4100. For an emergency where a child is in immediate danger, call 911.

A GUARDIAN FOR THE CHILD

In these cases, the court can name a guardian ad litem. This person looks into the child's situation and speaks for the child's best interests. A relative can also ask for custody.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the separate Probate Court under Ohio law. Here is the general shape of the process.

CONFIRM THE RICHLAND PROBATE DETAILS

Adoption is not filed in the Domestic Relations Court or the Juvenile Court. It goes to the separate Probate Court. This guide does not list that court's filing fees or local forms, so confirm them with the Probate Court. Adoption is governed statewide by R.C. Chapter 3107.

1

File the petition in Probate

File the Ohio Petition for Adoption of a Minor in the Probate Court. Add the child's birth certificate. For a stepparent, add the marriage certificate too.

2

Address consent

The other parent usually must consent. A court can excuse consent in limited cases under R.C. 3107.07, such as a year of no contact or support without good reason. A child 12 or older also consents.

3

Complete the home study

Ohio law usually asks for a home study or assessment, often reduced for a stepparent adoption. The court sets what your adoption type needs.

4

Attend the hearing

The court reviews consent, the assessment, and the child's best interest. If it says yes, it signs a final decree and a new birth record can follow.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Richland County.

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

FULL REPRESENTATION

An attorney handles the whole case

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

LIMITED-SCOPE (FLAT FEE)

Hire us for specific tasks

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

Ways to pay

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

START IN TWO MINUTES

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

BEFORE YOU GO

Important disclosures.

Please read these notes about how to use this guide.

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FEES AND PROCEDURES CHANGE

The court information in this guide was verified as of June 15, 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Richland County courts before you file.

AWARDS AND REVIEWS

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

JURISDICTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

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