

## PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

# Family Law in Scioto County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Portsmouth and across Scioto 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 Scioto County splits family law across three separate courts.

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

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

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

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## 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 Scioto County.

01

## Which court handles this?

Married couples file divorce or dissolution in the Domestic Relations Division. Unmarried parents file custody in the Juvenile Division. Adoptions go to the Probate Division. All three sit at 602 7th Street.

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 Scioto 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.

### A REQUIRED PARENTING CLASS

In a divorce or dissolution with minor children, both parents must take the Successful Co-Parenting class within 60 days of filing. It is a short online seminar run with OSU Extension.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

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

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## QUESTION ONE

# Which court is actually handling your case?

One family can touch more than one court. Scioto County splits family law across three courts, all at 602 7th Street in Portsmouth. Start with the relationship, and with what you need a judge to decide.

**MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED**

## Domestic Relations Division

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

**WHO HEARS IT**

Judge Jerry L. Buckler (Room 303).

**PARENTS NEVER MARRIED**

## Juvenile Division

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

**WHO HEARS IT**

Judge Rebecca L. Bennett.

**ADOPTION**

## Probate Division

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

**WHERE**

602 7th St., Room 201.

### Three separate courts, one address

Scioto County has a separate Domestic Relations Division for divorce, a separate Juvenile Division for unmarried-parent custody, and a separate Probate Division for adoption. All three sit at 602 7th Street in Portsmouth. File with the right one for your case.

## PART ONE

# The Domestic Relations Division ends marriages.

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

DIVORCE OR DISSOLUTION	POST-DECREE MOTION	WHERE YOU FILE	RESIDENCY
\$250	\$130	Clerk of Courts	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 fee 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.

## THE DEPOSIT, PLUS A COUPLE OF SMALL FUNDS

A divorce or dissolution costs \$250 to file, with or without children. A small mediation fund fee, \$40, is included. If a guardian is appointed for the children, an \$800 deposit applies. 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.

## WITH CHILDREN, TAKE THE CLASS FIRST

A dissolution is fully agreed, and the hearing is 30 to 90 days out, where both spouses must appear. If you have minor children, both parents must finish the Successful Co-Parenting class within 60 days of filing.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Petition for Dissolution (Form 17)</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	Both spouses sign; opens the joint case
<a href="#">Separation Agreement (Form 19)</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	Your signed terms; notarize this first
<a href="#">Financial Disclosure (DR Form 5)</a> <a href="https://sciotocountydrccourt.com">https://sciotocountydrccourt.com</a>	Scioto DR forms	Each petitioner files one
<a href="#">Parenting plan + worksheet</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	With children; the plan and support math
<a href="#">IV-D application + UCCJEA</a> <a href="https://sciotocountydrccourt.com">https://sciotocountydrccourt.com</a>	Scioto DR forms	With children; support setup and custody affidavit
<a href="#">Decree of Dissolution (Form 18)</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	The judgment the court signs

**REQUIRED****Successful Co-Parenting**

This 3-hour class runs online through OSU Extension. It is required in a divorce or dissolution with minor children, to be done within 60 days of filing. You bring the certificate to the final hearing.

**MEDIATION**

The court's mediation program is free to the public and can help settle parenting issues. It is never used for a domestic violence case or to decide a protection order.

## DIVORCE

# Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed with the Clerk of Courts in the Domestic Relations Division. Scioto uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms, and you can ask for temporary orders while the case runs.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">Complaint for Divorce</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	Starts the lawsuit; with or without children
<a href="#">Financial Disclosure (DR Form 5)</a> <a href="https://sciotocountydrccourt.com">https://sciotocountydrccourt.com</a>	Scioto DR forms	Your income and property
<a href="#">Parenting Proceeding Affidavit</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	With children; the UCCJEA affidavit
<a href="#">Child support worksheet</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	With children; the support math
<a href="#">Affidavit 5 (Temporary Orders)</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	File if you want orders during the case

### Want orders during the case?

You can ask for temporary support or a parenting schedule while the divorce is pending. You file Affidavit 5, the motion and affidavit for temporary orders. A magistrate can issue them. See the next page.

### DON'T FORGET THE CLASS

A divorce with children also requires the Successful Co-Parenting class within 60 days of service. Bring the certificate to the final pretrial so the case is not delayed.

## TEMPORARY ORDERS

# Getting orders while the case runs.

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

## Ordinary temporary orders

You ask for temporary support, parenting time, or use of the home by motion and affidavit under the civil rules, using Affidavit 5. A magistrate can issue these temporary orders while the case is pending.

## Emergency orders are narrow

The court grants an emergency ex parte order only on a sworn showing of an extreme emergency, such as a child facing irreparable harm. The person asking must be ready to answer the judge's questions under oath.

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER AN EMERGENCY ORDER

If the court grants an emergency order without a hearing, it sets an evidentiary hearing within 14 business days where both sides are heard, and the order holds until then. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

## CHILDREN

# Custody, the class, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Scioto County requires a parenting class and handles support through the county agency.

**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.

## The co-parenting class

Successful Co-Parenting is a 3-hour seminar run online through OSU Extension. It is required in a divorce or dissolution with children, within 60 days of filing. The court can waive it for good cause.

**CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA**

The Scioto County child support agency handles support. Support is set under Ohio's guidelines, collected by income withholding, and paid through the state. Ask the court for the agency's current contact.

## 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 Division for the same \$250 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 Scioto County order.

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

**POST-DECREE MOTION****\$130**

To modify or enforce an order after the decree

**MEDIATION FUND (MODIFICATION)****\$50**

Included with a modification filing

**PROTECTION ORDER****\$0**

No filing fee for the petitioner

**Modifying and enforcing**

To change custody or support, or to enforce an order, you file a post-decree motion for \$130. Support changes can also start through the county child support agency.

**A NOTE ON CONTEMPT**

If the other parent ignores a court order, you can file for contempt to enforce it. In a contempt case, the court can award attorney fees, with a standard amount of up to \$350.

## HELP ALONG THE WAY

# Mediation, GALs, and the class.

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

## Mediation

The court's mediation program is free to the public and helps parents reach an agreement on their own. 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 in a contested case. A deposit of \$800 applies in a domestic relations case to cover the fees.

## Successful Co-Parenting

This required 3-hour class, run online with OSU Extension, teaches parents how to lower conflict and protect their children. Finish it within 60 days of filing.

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 Scioto County.

Find My Service · [gavvl.com/find-my-service](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service)

Get started · [gavvl.com/start](https://gavvl.com/start)

Call · (844) 694-2885

Email · [support@gavvl.com](mailto:support@gavvl.com)

## PROTECTION ORDERS

# When safety comes first.

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

FILING FEE	ADULT CASES	EX PARTE ORDER	FINAL ORDER
\$0 to petitioner	DR Division	Same day	Up to 5 years

### How it works here

An adult protection order is filed in the Domestic Relations Division under R.C. 3113.31, with no fee. The court holds an ex parte hearing the same day you file. You must appear for that hearing and the later ones.

### If the other person is a minor

A protection order against a minor is filed in the Juvenile Division, where the court decides the emergency order within 24 hours or by the next court day. There is no fee there either.

### IF YOU ARE IN DANGER NOW

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

## PART TWO

# The Juvenile Division is for parents who were never married.

Were the parents never married? Then custody, parenting time, and child support are decided in the Juvenile Division, before Judge Bennett.

## Parentage comes first

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

## Filing for custody as an unmarried parent

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Complaint for Parentage and Custody</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 Uniform Form 23	Sets parentage, custody, parenting time
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Parenting Proceeding Affidavit</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	Required with a custody filing
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Child support worksheet</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	Required when support is at issue
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Application for Child Support</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>	Juvenile Court or CSEA	Sets up the support case with the agency

### COSTS AND FILING

A custody or visitation case costs \$275 for the first child and \$125 for each additional child, plus small court fees. A pro se packet is \$5. The Juvenile Division is at 602 7th Street, (740) 355-8306.

## AFTER A JUVENILE ORDER

# Changing orders and CPS cases.

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

## Modifying a juvenile order

To change custody, parenting time, or support, you file a motion in the existing case. Reopening a custody case costs \$125 per child. Support changes can also start through the county child support agency.

## Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Division. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak for the child, with no deposit in a county agency case. For immediate danger, call 911.

## A NOTE ON JUVENILE FILING COSTS

Scioto adds small special-project fees to juvenile filings, including a \$25 drug and alcohol screening fee on all of them. Ask the Juvenile Clerk for the all-in total so there are no surprises.

## PART THREE

# Adoption is handled by the Probate Division.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the Probate Division at 602 7th Street. Here is the basic shape.

## THE DEPOSIT, AND WHO CAN E-FILE

An adoption deposit is \$500 for the first child and \$250 for a second. Attorneys must e-file; people filing on their own file in person or by mail with a short self-representation form. Adoption records are kept confidential.

1

### File the petition in Probate

File the Ohio Petition to Adopt at 602 7th Street, Room 201. 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 rule consent is not required in some cases, such as a year of no contact or support. A child 12 or older also consents.

3

### Complete the home study

A home study is usually required, though a stepparent case is often streamlined. The court decides at a hearing whether the adoption is in the child's best interest.

4

### Attend the hearing

If the court says yes, it can issue an interlocutory order and then a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

## PART FOUR

# How Gavvl Law can help in Scioto 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](https://gavvl.com/find-my-service). You get a recommendation and your payment options. Or call (844) 694-2885. Consultations are low-cost.

## BEFORE YOU GO

# Important disclosures.

Please read these notes about how to use this guide.

**INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE**

This guide explains how things generally work in Scioto County, but it cannot account for the facts of your case. 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 situation, talk with a licensed Ohio attorney.

**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 Scioto 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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