

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Shelby County

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

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- 01** See how Shelby County splits family law between two courts in one building.

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

01

Which court handles this?

Married couples file divorce or dissolution in the Domestic Relations Division. Unmarried parents file custody in the Juvenile Court. Adoptions go to the Probate Court. All sit at 100 E. Court Street in Sidney.

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 Shelby 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.

BRING ENOUGH COPIES

A Domestic Relations filing in Shelby County needs the original plus four copies. E-filing is also available through the Clerk. Check the deposit and the copy rule before you file.

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. In Shelby County they share one building on East Court Street in Sidney. 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 Timothy S. Sell (3rd floor).

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Court

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

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Jeffrey J. Beigel (2nd floor).

ADOPTION

Probate Court

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

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Beigel, same as Juvenile.

Two courts, one address

The Domestic Relations Division sits on the 3rd floor under Judge Sell. The combined Juvenile and Probate Court sits on the 2nd floor under Judge Beigel. Both are at 100 E. Court Street in Sidney. Each keeps its own forms and fees, so 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?

WHERE YOU FILE	COPIES	SEMINAR	RESIDENCY
Clerk of Courts	Original + 4	Required with kids	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.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses file together. 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.

CONFIRM THE DEPOSIT

Shelby County requires a cost deposit to file, set by a court rule. The exact dollar amount is not listed in this guide. Confirm the current deposit with the Clerk of Courts at (937) 498-7221 before you file. A fee waiver is available if you cannot afford it.

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, FINISH THE SEMINAR FIRST

A dissolution without children is set for a final hearing as soon as you file. A dissolution with children is not set until both parents finish the parenting seminar. Either way, the hearing is 30 to 90 days out, and both spouses must appear.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition for Dissolution 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 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 affidavits https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Income and property details
Parenting plan + worksheet https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the plan and support math
Local forms DR-6, DR-7, DR-8 https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Shelby DR forms	With children; local parenting and identifier forms
Decree of Dissolution https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	The judgment the court signs

THE SEMINAR**Shield Your Child from Conflict**

Both parents in a divorce, dissolution, or legal separation with minor children take this class before the final hearing. Catholic Social Services runs it in Sidney and collects the fee.

IF YOU LIVE FAR AWAY

If you live more than 60 miles from Sidney, you can take another court's approved parenting program instead, but you have to find and enroll in it yourself. Reach the program at (937) 498-4593.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed through the Clerk of Courts. Shelby uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms. Remember to bring the original plus four copies of what you file.

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
Affidavit of Income and Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Notarized; filed with the Complaint
Affidavit of Property https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the UCCJEA affidavit
Motion for Temporary Orders https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	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 a motion with a supporting affidavit. See the next page for how Shelby handles these.

IF YOU CANNOT FIND YOUR SPOUSE

Service can be by publication if you cannot find the other spouse, with the court's approval. Ask the Clerk at (937) 498-7221 about the steps and any added service cost.

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.

How you ask

You file a motion with a supporting affidavit. For temporary custody, the affidavit must show who has the child, for how long, and why your plan is best. For temporary child support, you attach a worksheet.

Spousal support needs a hearing

A Shelby County rule worth knowing: the court will not grant temporary spousal support on an ex parte basis. That request always gets a hearing, where both sides can be heard first.

ASKING A SPOUSE TO LEAVE, AND RESPONSE TIMING

To order a spouse out of the home, your affidavit must give specific dates and facts of abuse; a bare claim will not do. The county does not publish a set deadline for the other party to respond to a temporary motion, so confirm the timing with the Clerk at (937) 498-7221. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, the seminar, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Shelby County also requires a parenting seminar and has a detailed standard schedule.

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 standard schedule

When parents cannot agree, the court's standard schedule gives about 90 overnights a year: alternating weekends, a weeknight, split holidays, and alternating weeks in summer. Parents who live far apart get a long-distance schedule.

CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA

The Shelby County child support agency handles support. Reach it at (937) 498-4981. Support is collected by income withholding and paid through the state, with a small processing fee added.

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. Legal separation sets terms without ending the marriage. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

A note on moving with the children

The standard parenting rule restates Ohio's notice rules for relocation, day-care access, school activities, and records. If you plan to move, file the relocation notice ahead of time and follow those rules so your parenting time is not disrupted.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing a Shelby County order.

Life changes after a case ends. To bring a new issue back, you file a motion in the case that issued your decree.

Modifying and enforcing

To change custody or support, or to enforce an order, you file a post-decree motion in your original case. The court can also order the parenting seminar again. Support changes can start through the agency at (937) 498-4981.

Confirm the motion fee

Shelby County sets its post-decree deposit by court rule, and the exact amount is not listed here. Confirm the current fee with the Clerk at (937) 498-7221 before you file.

REOPENING A CLOSED CASE

If your case had unpaid court costs, those usually must be paid in full before the court will reopen the case on a post-judgment motion. Clear any old balance first.

KEEP YOUR ADDRESS CURRENT

Post-decree motions are served on the other party directly, so the court needs current addresses. Keeping yours updated helps your filings move without delay.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and the seminar.

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

Mediation

The court can refer a parenting dispute to mediation to help 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 and speak to their best interests in a contested case.

The seminar

Shield Your Child from Conflict, run by Catholic Social Services, teaches parents how separation affects children and how to lower the stress on them.

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 Shelby 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 civil protection order can order someone to stay away. Ohio has one for domestic violence and one for stalking. Your safety drives the timeline.

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

Two kinds of order

A domestic violence order protects family or household members. A stalking order covers stalking or a sexually-oriented offense, even without a family tie. Both are filed in the Domestic Relations Division, with no fee.

How it works here

You file a petition using the Ohio standard forms and usually get a same-day ex parte hearing. A full hearing follows within the time the law sets. A final order can last up to five years.

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

Juvenile Court is for parents who were never married.

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

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
Complaint for Parentage and Custody https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Uniform Form 23	Sets parentage, custody, parenting time
Affidavit of Income and Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required with the complaint
Parenting Proceeding Affidavit https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required with a custody filing
Application for Child Support https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Juvenile Court or CSEA	Sets up the support case with the agency

COSTS AND FILING

The Juvenile Court is at 100 E. Court Street, 2nd floor, (937) 498-7255. A filing requires a \$250 deposit. If you reopen a closed case later, any unpaid court costs must be paid in full first.

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 support, you file the Motion for Change of Child Support in the existing case. To change custody or parenting time, you file a motion as well. Support changes can also start through the agency at (937) 498-4981.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Court. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak for the child. To report concerns about a child's safety, contact county children services. For immediate danger, call 911.

A NOTE ON UNMARRIED-PARENT EMERGENCIES

If you were never married and need emergency custody, the Juvenile Court handles it, not the Domestic Relations Division. If the emergency involves violence, a civil protection order may be the faster tool.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the Probate Court, before Judge Beigel, who also runs the Juvenile Court. Here is the basic shape.

CONFIRM THE DEPOSIT

The Probate Court sorts adoptions by type and sets each deposit on its own fees calculator. Confirm the current deposit and any home-study, background-check, and consent steps with Probate at (937) 498-7263 before you file.

1

File the petition in Probate

File the Ohio Petition for Adoption of a Minor. Add the child's birth certificate. For a stepparent, add the marriage certificate too. Probate is at 100 E. Court Street, 2nd floor.

2

Address consent

The other parent's consent is usually needed. So is the child's, if they are 12 or older. A court can waive a parent's consent for a year of no contact or support.

3

Complete the home study

Ohio law usually asks for a home study. A stepparent case can be simpler. Ask the Probate Court what your adoption type needs.

4

Attend the hearing

If the court says yes, Judge Beigel signs a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Shelby 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.

INFORMATION, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

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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 Shelby 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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