

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Trumbull County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Warren and across Trumbull 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 Trumbull County runs one Family Court for divorce and juvenile cases.

 - 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 Trumbull County.

01

Which court handles this?

The Family Court has two parts. The Domestic Relations Division hears divorce and dissolution. The Juvenile Department handles custody for unmarried parents. Adoption is a separate 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 Trumbull 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.

TWO PARTS, TWO FILING METHODS

A divorce or dissolution is filed in person or by mail; the Domestic Relations Division does not yet take e-filing. The Juvenile Department, by contrast, now requires e-filing. Check the right method for your case.

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. Trumbull County combines divorce and juvenile cases in one Family Court, with adoption in a separate court. 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.

WHERE

220 Main Ave. SW, Warren.

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Department

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

WHERE

Same Family Court building.

ADOPTION

Probate Court

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

WHERE

161 High St. NW. Judge Fredericka.

One Family Court, two judges, plus Probate

The Trumbull County Family Court has two parts: the Domestic Relations Division and the Juvenile Department. Both sit at 220 Main Avenue SW in Warren, under Judges Bluedorn and Engler. Adoption is a separate Probate Court at 161 High Street NW. File with the right court 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	DR FILING	RESIDENCY
\$301	\$105	In person/mail	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 filing 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.

ONE FLAT FEE, FILED ON PAPER

A divorce, legal separation, annulment, or dissolution all cost \$301 to file, with or without children. The Domestic Relations Division takes filings in person or by mail only — no e-filing yet. One spouse must have lived in Ohio six months.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution packet, step by step.

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

LIST EVERYTHING YOU OWN AND OWE

A Trumbull dissolution is fully agreed, but the court still wants a complete picture: the Separation Agreement must list all assets and debts for both spouses, even when you already agree on how to split them. The hearing is 30 to 90 days out, and both must appear.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition for Dissolution (Form 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 (Form 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
Affidavit of Property & Debt 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 plan (Form 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 parenting
Child support worksheet https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	With children; the support math
Decree of Dissolution (Form 18) https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	The judgment the court signs

GOOD TO KNOW**No required class here**

Many counties make divorcing parents take a class. Trumbull County does not require a separate parenting class. Its parenting rules run through the county Parenting and Companionship Guidelines instead.

BOTH MUST APPLY FOR A FEE WAIVER

If you cannot afford the \$301 deposit, you can ask the court to waive it with a poverty affidavit. For a dissolution, both petitioners must file their own indigency affidavits.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed with the DR Clerk, in person or by mail. Trumbull uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms plus a few local ones, including a restraining order that protects both sides.

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 & Expenses https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Your financial picture
Affidavit of Property & Debt https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Lists what you own and owe
Mandatory Restraining Order https://www.co.trumbull.oh.us/family-court/index.html	Trumbull local form	Issues at filing; binds both spouses
Motion for Temporary Orders https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Affidavit 5	File if you want orders during the case

A restraining order at filing

When you file a divorce, legal separation, or annulment, you also file the court's Mandatory Restraining Order. It binds both spouses and is the only mutual restraining order the court uses. It protects assets and the children's stability.

IF YOU CANNOT FIND YOUR SPOUSE

Service can be by publication or posting if you cannot find the other spouse, with the court's approval. Ask the DR Clerk at (330) 675-2627 about the steps and any added 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 request temporary orders by motion, using Affidavit 5. Remember the Mandatory Restraining Order is already in place from the day you file, protecting assets and the children's routine while the case runs.

Confirm the response timing

Trumbull County does not publish a fixed deadline for the other party to respond to a temporary-order motion. Confirm the current timing with the DR Clerk at (330) 675-2627 so you know what to expect.

EMERGENCY CUSTODY

If a child faces immediate harm, you can ask for ex parte emergency custody, but you must appear in person the day you file. If granted, the court sets a full hearing within 10 days, and a request to change or end that order is heard within 14 days. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

CHILDREN

Custody, the guidelines, and child support.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Trumbull County leans on its own parenting guidelines 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 parenting guidelines

When parents cannot agree, the court applies the Trumbull County Parenting and Companionship Guidelines as the default schedule. Parents are encouraged to agree on their own plan first, but absent agreement the guidelines control.

CHILD SUPPORT RUNS THROUGH THE CSEA

The Trumbull County child support agency handles support. Reach it at (330) 675-2732. Support is set under Ohio's guidelines, collected by income withholding, 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 Division for the same \$301 deposit. Legal separation sets terms without ending the marriage. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

A note on the home during a divorce

The court can grant one spouse exclusive use of the marital home during the case, but an emergency order to do so generally requires the other spouse to have been voluntarily away for at least 30 days in a row. Talk to a lawyer about how that applies to you.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing a Trumbull 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**\$105**

To modify or enforce an order after the decree

OBJECTIONS OR SET-ASIDE**\$55**

To challenge a magistrate's decision or order

MOTION FOR CONTINUANCE**\$25**

To move a hearing date, except in DV cases

Modifying and enforcing

To change custody or support, or to enforce an order, you file a post-decree motion for \$105, in person or by mail. Support changes can also start through the county agency at (330) 675-2732.

A NOTE ON SEPARATE MOTIONS

A separate deposit is required for each separate motion or request for relief listed in a caption. If you ask for several different things, expect a deposit for each.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, GALs, and the guidelines.

Trumbull 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. It costs \$100 per party for the first four hours, then \$50 per party each added hour. It is never used 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 parenting guidelines

The county's Parenting and Companionship Guidelines set a default schedule when parents cannot agree. There is no separate required class unless a judge orders one in your case.

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 Trumbull 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 (CPO) 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	FULL HEARING
\$0 to petitioner	DR Division	Same day	About 7–10 days

How it works here

An adult domestic violence or dating-violence CPO is filed in the Domestic Relations Division under R.C. 3113.31. There is no fee. The court can grant a same-day ex parte order, then hold a full hearing, usually within about 7 to 10 court days.

If the other person is a minor

A protection order against a minor goes to the Juvenile Department instead, as a juvenile CPO. Dating-violence orders are available too, for a partner you are or were dating.

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 Department is for parents who were never married.

Were the parents never married? Then custody, parenting time, and child support are decided in the Juvenile Department of the Family Court.

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
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
Child support worksheet https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domestic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1	Ohio Supreme Court forms	Required when support is at issue
Application for Child Support https://www.co.trumbull.oh.us/family-court/index.html	Juvenile Department or CSEA	Sets up the support case with the agency

COSTS AND E-FILING

A new parentage, custody, or visitation case costs \$186 to file, and a later motion is \$131. Unlike the DR side, the Juvenile Department now requires e-filing. The Juvenile Clerk is at (330) 675-2375.

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, by e-filing. A motion costs \$131. Support changes can also start through the county agency at (330) 675-2732.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Department. The court can appoint a guardian ad litem to speak for the child. To report concerns, call Ohio's child-abuse line at 1-855-642-4453. For immediate danger, call 911.

A NOTE ON THE TWO FILING METHODS

Trumbull runs its two sides differently. The Juvenile Department requires e-filing, while the Domestic Relations Division takes paper filings only. Double-check which side and method your case uses before you file.

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the separate Probate Court, before Judge Fredericka. Here is the basic shape.

A SEPARATE COURT, CASH OR CHECK ONLY

The Probate Court is at 161 High Street NW in Warren, (330) 675-2521. An adoption deposit is \$151. Note: the Probate Court takes cash, check, or money order only — no debit or credit cards.

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. Ohio uses the same forms in every county.

2

Address consent

In a stepparent case, the other parent usually must consent. A court can excuse that consent, for example after 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. 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 Fredericka signs a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Trumbull 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 Trumbull 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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