

PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Family Law in Washington County

A plain-English map for divorce, dissolution, custody, support, and adoption in Marietta and across Washington County: which court to use, what to file, what it costs, and when to get help.

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- 01** Washington County has no separate divorce court. See which division actually hears your case.

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

 - 03** Find the right Clerk packet, the deposit, and the forms 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 Washington County.

01

Which court handles this?

In Washington County, the General Division of Common Pleas hears divorce and dissolution. Juvenile handles custody and support for parents who were never married. Probate handles adoption.

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 Washington 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.

BEFORE YOU FILE

Courts can reject filings over small technical problems. Check the current deposit, the required forms, and copy counts. Ask whether you can file by mail with the Clerk's Legal Division before you go.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Four parts: Domestic Relations (divorce and dissolution), Juvenile Court (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. Washington County is unusual: it has no stand-alone divorce court. Start with the relationship, and with the decision you need a judge to make.

MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED

General Division

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

WHO HEARS IT

Magistrate Laura Silwani; Judges Coil and Halliday preside.

PARENTS NEVER MARRIED

Juvenile Division

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

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Timothy A. Williams; Magistrate Kyle D. Boker.

ADOPTION

Probate Division

Stepparent, kinship, and adult adoption, plus name changes tied to adoption.

WHO HEARS IT

Judge Timothy A. Williams — the same judge as Juvenile.

Why the right division matters

All three divisions sit in the same courthouse at 205 Putnam Street. But they use different forms and deposits. Filing in the wrong one costs time and money. If your case touches more than one court, sort that out before you build your packet.

PART ONE

The General Division is the divorce and dissolution court.

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

WHERE YOU FILE	FILING DEPOSIT	HEARING WINDOW	RESIDENCY
Clerk's Legal Division	\$330	30–90 days	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. Add child support if you have children.

Dissolution is built on agreement.

Both spouses file together. They ask the court to approve a signed Separation Agreement. The court holds a short 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 NUMBER, TWO SOURCES

Every current Clerk filing packet lists a \$330 deposit for divorce and dissolution. The Clerk's online fee schedule lists \$350 for the same filing. The deposit goes toward your real costs. The balance is billed or refunded at the end. Check the current amount with the Clerk's Legal Division at (740) 373-6623 ext. 2503 before you file.

DISSOLUTION

The dissolution packet, step by step.

The Clerk posts full packets with a checklist cover sheet. Sign the Separation Agreement in front of a notary first. Then build the rest of the packet around it.

SIGN IN THIS ORDER

Notarize the Separation Agreement before you fill out the affidavits. Make two copies of each signed form. Do not put Social Security or account numbers on the forms.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Petition for Dissolution https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6950	Clerk packet (with children)	Opens the joint case; both spouses sign
Separation Agreement https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6950	Clerk packet	Your signed terms; notarize this first
Information Sheet (Notice to WCCSEA) https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6950	Clerk packet	Tells the child support agency about your case
Affidavit of Income & Expenses https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6962	Forms page (Word)	Each spouse files one; notarized
Affidavit of Property & Debt https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6963	Forms page (Word)	Each spouse files one; notarized
Parenting Plan or Shared Parenting Plan https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6950	Clerk packet (with children)	Pick one; required when you have children

WITH CHILDREN

51-page packet — \$330

Adds a Custody Affidavit, a Health Insurance Affidavit, and a Parenting Plan or Shared Parenting Plan. Get it from the Clerk's Forms page.

WITHOUT CHILDREN

45-page packet — \$330

Petition, Separation Agreement, Information Sheet, and each spouse's Income/Expense and Property/Debt affidavits. No parenting forms.

DIVORCE

Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is filed with the Clerk's Legal Division. Domestic Magistrate Silwani usually hears it. The Clerk's "Divorce (With Children)" packet carries the full checklist.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Divorce https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6949	Clerk packet (with children)	Starts the lawsuit; two copies
Information Sheet (Notice to WCCSEA) https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6949	Clerk packet	Certifies a IV-D application with the CSEA
Affidavit of Income & Expenses https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6962	Forms page (Word)	Notarized; two copies
Affidavit of Property & Debt https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6963	Forms page (Word)	Notarized; two copies
Custody (Parenting Proceeding) Affidavit https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6949	Clerk packet	Notarized; required when children are involved
Request for Service https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/8936	Forms page (PDF)	Tells the Clerk how to serve the other spouse

If you cannot find your spouse
 When you cannot find the other spouse, the court allows service by posting and mail under Local Rule 11. A Poverty Affidavit can put off the deposit. Costs are still billed at the end.

DIVORCE WITHOUT CHILDREN
 The Forms page lists a "Divorce (Without Children)" packet, but the link is broken right now. Ask the Clerk's Legal Division for the packet in person, or to fix the link.

TEMPORARY ORDERS

Getting support or other orders while the case runs.

A divorce can take months. Temporary orders set the rules in the meantime — things like temporary support or who stays in the home.

How it works here

Local Rule 29 covers temporary orders in DR cases. The Divorce packet notes that the temporary-orders forms are kept in the Law Library, not in the packet. The court's financial-disclosure affidavit is where you ask for temporary child or spousal support.

Asking your spouse to leave the home

Is exclusive use of the home at issue? The Forms page has a local Motion to Require Spouse to Vacate Premises.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

We could not get the full text of Local Rule 29 from the county's site. We also could not find a deadline to respond to a temporary-orders request. Washington County has no published ex parte emergency-custody rule on the General Division side. Ask the Domestic Magistrate's office at (740) 373-6623 ext. 2303 how temporary and emergency motions are reviewed and scheduled. If you need protection from domestic violence right now, see the protection-order section.

CHILDREN

Custody, parenting time, and child support in a divorce.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. The right words help you read the forms and talk to the court.

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.

Child support runs through the CSEA

The Washington County Child Support Enforcement Agency handles support. It is at 205 Putnam Street, 4th floor, (740) 373-9324. Support is collected by income withholding. Money paid straight to the other parent counts as a gift, not support.

EVERY DR CASE

Every Washington County divorce, dissolution, and post-decree motion must include the Information Sheet (Notice to WCCSEA). It certifies that you filed a Title IV-D application with the CSEA before or with your case.

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 General Division. The Clerk does not post a packet for either one.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

Washington County posts no legal-separation or annulment packet. It also has no separate fee line for them. Ask the Clerk's Legal Division ((740) 373-6623 ext. 2503) which forms to use and what deposit applies.

AFTER THE DECREE

Changing or enforcing a Washington County order.

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

CHANGE CUSTODY**\$200**

Motion for Change of Parental Rights & Responsibilities; a new Information Sheet and Custody Affidavit go with it

MODIFY SUPPORT OR VISITATION**\$200**

\$35 for a counter motion; support reviews can also start through the CSEA

QDRO**\$80**

Divides a retirement account named in the decree

Contempt and enforcement

Is an order not being followed? A local Show Cause Order & Notice form is on the Forms page. Support enforcement usually goes through the CSEA.

Objecting to a magistrate

You can object to a magistrate's decision in writing. For an objection or appeal, the transcript must be prepared by the court's official transcriptionist, John Yocca, through the Clerk.

MOVING WITH THE CHILDREN

A residential parent must file a Notice of Intent to Relocate before moving (R.C. 3109.051(G)). The posted form is captioned for the Juvenile Division. Ask the Clerk which form the General Division uses for a divorce decree. Also ask the deposit for a contempt motion, which the fee schedule does not list.

HELP ALONG THE WAY

Mediation, custody investigations, and GALs.

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

Mediation

The General Division offers mediation for domestic cases. The county also runs visitation mediation. It has a \$125 fee line and a Motion for Mediation and Referral Form on the Clerk's Forms page.

Custody investigations

Under Local Rule 24, the court can order a custody investigation. It can also interview children privately, in chambers. A Motion for In Camera Interview form is posted.

Guardians ad litem

In Juvenile cases, the Court Administrator appoints a guardian ad litem from an approved list. The GAL speaks to the children's best interests.

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 Washington 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 (DVCPO) can order someone to stay away. It can also set temporary custody. Your safety drives the timeline.

FILING FEE	EX PARTE HEARING	FULL HEARING	FORMS
\$0 to petitioner	Same day	Within 7–10 court days	Ohio standard set

CONFIRM WHERE TO FILE

Washington County does not post a DVCPO petition packet online. The Clerk's Forms page does post civil stalking protection-order forms. That hints adult protection orders are filed with the Clerk for the General Division. But this is not confirmed. Before you file, call the Clerk's Legal Division at (740) 373-6623 ext. 2503. Ask where DVCPO petitions are filed and which forms to use. Use the Ohio Supreme Court standard protection-order forms.

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 to each other? Then custody, parenting time, parentage, and child support are decided in the Juvenile Division.

Parentage usually comes first

For unmarried parents, the court often must set legal parentage first. Then it can set custody or support. In Washington County, the Complaint for Custody packet is also how parentage is set up.

Filing for custody as an unmarried parent

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Custody https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6968	Juvenile packet (21 pages)	Establishes parentage, residential parent, or parenting time
Custody (Parenting Proceeding) Affidavit https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6968	Juvenile packet	Notarized; lists where the children have lived
Health Insurance Affidavit https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6953	Forms page (Word)	Notarized; two copies
Affidavit of Income & Expenses https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6962	Forms page (Word)	Notarized; two copies
Request for Service https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/8936	Forms page (PDF)	Mark how the other parent is served

BRING WITH YOU

Bring the children's birth certificates when you file. The packet states a \$330 deposit. Juvenile deposits follow the schedule posted in the Juvenile Clerk's office. The custody deputy clerk is Jill Roach, (740) 373-6623 ext. 2421. Clerks cannot give legal advice.

PARENTING TIME

The county's standard parenting-time schedule.

Sometimes parents cannot agree, and an order says the Standard Parenting Time Policy applies. Then the Juvenile Division's policy (effective May 1, 2015) sets the schedule.

48 HOURS

Notice to cancel

The non-residential parent must give at least 48 hours' notice to cancel parenting time. Cancelled time is not made up, unless both parents agree.

20 MINUTES

Grace period

The residential parent need not wait more than 20 minutes. A parent who is more than 20 minutes late may lose that visit.

RECORDS

School and daycare

Both parents have a right to school and daycare records. The residential parent must list the other parent and share calendars and report cards.

Local and long-distance

The policy has separate rules for local parenting time and for long-distance cases. Parents can always agree to more time than the schedule gives.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

The General Division has its own visitation policies (Policy 3 and Policy 3A) for divorce cases. We did not confirm whether the divorce schedule matches the Juvenile policy. Ask the Clerk if it matters to your case.

MORE JUVENILE FILINGS

Visitation, companionship, and non-parent care.

The Juvenile Division also handles parenting-time complaints. It also handles custody to relatives and other caregivers.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
Complaint for Visitation https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/6971	Juvenile packet (11 pages)	Asks for a parenting-time order; \$125 deposit
Complaint for Visitation — Non-Residential Parent https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/160	Forms page (PDF)	Version for the non-residential parent; instructions posted separately
Visitation Mediation Referral https://www.washingtongov.org/DocumentCenter/View/176	Forms page (PDF)	Routes a visitation dispute to mediation

Custody to a relative or caregiver

Legal custody to a non-parent is a Juvenile matter. The custody deputy clerk, Jill Roach (ext. 2421), also handles Grandparent Power of Attorney filings.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

The county does not post a non-parent custody or grandparent companionship packet. Ask the Juvenile Clerk whether non-parents use the Complaint for Custody packet, and what deposit applies.

AFTER A JUVENILE ORDER

Changing orders, emergencies, and CPS cases.

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

MODIFY CUSTODY**\$200**

10-page packet; motion, notarized
Custody Affidavit, Request for Service

MODIFY VISITATION**\$200**

10-page packet; needs a Parenting
Proceeding Affidavit

RELOCATION NOTICE**File first**

Notice of Intent to Relocate before
every move (R.C. 3109.051(G))

Emergency (ex parte) relief — Rule 22

An ex parte order needs a motion and a sworn affidavit. The affidavit must show serious or lasting harm. A judge or magistrate reviews it no later than the next court day. The court then sets a review hearing. You can file a motion to change it within 7 days.

Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Division. The court appoints a guardian ad litem for the children. Low-income parents may ask for an appointed lawyer.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

We could not confirm the public children-services agency or the 24-hour abuse hotline for Washington County. There is also no posted way to register an out-of-state order. Ask the Juvenile Clerk about both (Jill Roach, ext. 2421).

PART THREE

Adoption is handled by the Probate Division.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions are filed in the Probate Division. They go before Judge Timothy A. Williams. He is the same judge who hears Juvenile cases.

STEPPARENT (MINOR)**\$460**

Also covers CSB permanent-custody minor adoptions

OTHER MINOR ADOPTION**\$850**

Kinship or private, where not stepparent

ADULT ADOPTION**\$115**

Foreign adoption is \$225; placement is \$450

1**File the petition with the Probate Division**

The adoption deputy clerk is Rachel Davis, (740) 373-6623 ext. 2413. Probate staff cannot give legal advice.

2**Address consent**

A stepparent adoption usually needs the other legal parent's consent. The court can find that consent is not required. This is the part that most often needs a lawyer.

3**Complete any required assessment**

The court may ask for a home study or report. It depends on the type of adoption.

4**Attend the hearing**

If the court approves, it issues a final decree of adoption. A new birth record can follow.

CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

Washington County's Probate Court uses the Ohio Supreme Court standard adoption forms. We did not confirm whether it uses any extra local forms. We also did not confirm its home-study or hearing practice. Ask Rachel Davis at ext. 2413.

PART FOUR

How Gavvl Law can help in Washington 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 11, 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Washington County Clerk of 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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