

## PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

# Family Law in Wood County

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

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- 01** See which court hears your case, and where each one sits in Wood County.

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

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  - 03** Learn about the free online parenting class Wood County requires.

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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 Wood County.

01

## Which court handles this?

The Domestic Relations Court hears divorce and dissolution. The Juvenile Court handles custody for parents who were never married. Probate handles adoption. They sit at two addresses in Bowling Green.

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 Wood 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.

### E-FILING IS REQUIRED

Wood County requires e-filing for divorce cases, and for lawyers in juvenile cases. People without a lawyer file the juvenile case the regular way. Check the deposit and forms before you file.

### 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. In Wood County they sit at two addresses, and Juvenile has its own building. Start with the relationship, and with what you need a judge to decide.

**MARRIED OR FORMERLY MARRIED**

## Domestic Relations Court

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

**WHERE**

Courtroom 3, the courthouse. Magistrates hear most DR cases.

**PARENTS NEVER MARRIED**

## Juvenile Court

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

**WHERE**

1032 S. Dunbridge Road.  
Judge David E. Woessner.

**ADOPTION**

## Probate Court

Stepparent, kinship, and adult adoption, plus name changes and marriage licenses.

**WHERE**

Courthouse, 2nd floor. Judge Woessner, same as Juvenile.

### Two addresses to know

The Domestic Relations and Probate courts sit at One Courthouse Square in Bowling Green. The Juvenile Court is across town at 1032 South Dunbridge Road, even though it shares a judge with Probate. Each court keeps its own forms and fees, so file with the right one for your case.

## 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?

WHERE YOU FILE	DIVORCE	DISSOLUTION	RESIDENCY
Clerk of Courts	\$350	\$300	90 days in Wood County

## QUICK PATHFINDER

## Do you agree on everything?

If yes, dissolution may fit, and it costs a little less. 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.

## A WOOD COUNTY RESIDENCY RULE

To file a dissolution here, at least one spouse must have lived in Wood County for 90 days, on top of Ohio's six-month rule. A divorce costs \$350 and a dissolution costs \$300. The deposit goes toward your real costs, and the balance is billed or refunded at the end.

## 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.

## BOTH OF YOU MUST SHOW UP

A dissolution is fully agreed. You file together, and the court sets a hearing 30 to 90 days out. Both spouses must appear and affirm the agreement. A Wood County shared parenting plan must also name who makes medical decisions and include a mediation clause.

FORM	WHERE TO GET IT	WHAT IT'S FOR
<a href="#">SF 17 — Petition and Waiver</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="#">SF 19 — Separation Agreement</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="#">Schedules A &amp; B + Affidavits 1 &amp; 2</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	Income and property details
<a href="#">Affidavits 3 &amp; 4</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; parenting and insurance
<a href="#">Parenting plan + IV-D application</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 setup
<a href="#">SF 18 — Decree of Dissolution</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

**WITH CHILDREN****Two classes apply**

If you have children, both parents take the free Up To Parents class online within 30 days of filing. School-age children are also assigned the Changing Families program, though it is paused right now.

**THE PARENTS' CLASS IS FREE**

Wood County's parent class is Up To Parents, a free self-paced course at [uptoparents.org](https://uptoparents.org). Finish it before your first court date, then print the certificate and file it with the Clerk.

DIVORCE

# Filing a divorce when you do not agree.

Divorce is e-filed with the Wood County Clerk of Courts. Wood uses the Ohio Supreme Court forms. The financial and parenting affidavits go in with the Complaint.

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="#">Affidavit 1 + Schedules</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	Income and expenses, with documents
<a href="#">Affidavit 2 — Property &amp; Debt</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	Lists what you own and owe
<a href="#">Affidavits 3 &amp; 4</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; parenting and insurance
<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?**  
 File a Motion for Temporary Relief with Affidavit 5. The court hears it within 14 days of service, and can even rule on the affidavits sooner. See the next page for how it works.

**A NOTE ON CHILD SUPPORT**  
 No temporary child support order can issue until the IV-D application is on file with the Wood County child support agency. Apply by your hearing date at the latest. The agency is on the first floor of the courthouse.

## 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 who stays in the home.

## Heard within 14 days

You file a Motion for Temporary Relief with Affidavit 5. The court hears it within 14 days of service. Each side can get one short continuance. The court can also rule on the affidavits alone, without a hearing, in proper cases.

## Still living together?

If the spouses still share a home, the court usually treats the motion as a way to fix who pays which ongoing bills, rather than setting custody or support orders right away.

## ASKING A SPOUSE TO LEAVE, AND EMERGENCIES

The court grants exclusive use of the home without notice only when the other spouse has been gone for 30 days in a row, or when there is domestic violence. A true emergency motion needs a fact-specific affidavit. If a child is in danger, call the Children Services line at (419) 354-9669. If anyone is in danger right now, call 911.

## CHILDREN

# Custody, parenting time, and the parenting classes.

Ohio uses specific words for custody. Wood County also asks parents, and school-age children, to take short classes.

**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 parents' class is free

Both parents take Up To Parents, a free online class, within 30 days of filing and before the final hearing. It is self-paced, so you do not have to finish in one sitting. Print and file your certificate.

**THE CHILDREN'S CLASS IS PAUSED**

Wood County's Changing Families class for children is canceled until further notice. Children under nine can use the Sesame Street divorce resources with a parent in the meantime. Watch for the class to resume.

## 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. Legal separation uses the same \$350 deposit as a divorce. Annulment is rare and has narrow grounds.

### A note on retirement accounts

If a divorce divides a retirement account, it usually takes a separate order called a QDRO to split it with the plan. Wood charges \$75 for each one, and will not accept the entry without the deposit. Getting the wording right matters, so many people use a lawyer for this step.

## AFTER THE DECREE

# Changing or enforcing a Wood County order.

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

**REOPEN THE CASE****\$200**

To modify custody, parenting time, or support after the decree

**CONSENT ENTRY****\$50**

When both sides already agree on the change

**QDRO****\$75**

To split a retirement account named in the decree

**Modifying and enforcing**

To change custody or support, you reopen your original case with a motion. If a divorce decree set custody, later changes stay in that case, even though a brand-new unmarried-parent case would be a juvenile matter.

**REGISTERING AN OUT-OF-STATE ORDER**

Wood County does not post its steps for registering a custody or support order from another state. Confirm the process and fee with the Clerk's Legal Office at (419) 354-9280 before you file.

## HELP ALONG THE WAY

# Mediation, GALs, and home studies.

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

## Mediation

The court can send a parenting dispute to mediation to help parents agree. In fact, a Wood County shared parenting plan must include a clause that sends future disputes to mediation first.

## 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.

## Home studies

The court can order a home study to learn about a child's living situation. On the juvenile side it costs \$250, plus \$60 for each later visit.

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 Wood 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	EX PARTE ORDER	FULL HEARING	HEARD BY
\$0 to petitioner	Same day by 3 p.m.	7–10 days	DR Court

**How it works here**  
 DVCPO petitions are filed with the Clerk of Courts and heard in the Domestic Relations Court under R.C. 3113.31. There is no fee for the petitioner. File by 3 p.m. for a same-day ex parte hearing; after 3 p.m. it is heard the next business day.

**The full hearing**  
 A full hearing follows, within 7 business days if the respondent was told to leave the home, otherwise within 10 days. A final order can last up to five years. The Clerk can connect you with a victim advocate.

**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 on Dunbridge Road, before Judge Woessner.

## 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. Signing an acknowledgment of paternity does not, by itself, give a father custody or parenting time.

## 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/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Complaint for Parentage and Custody</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Juvenile Court (local + SC)	One filing for parentage, custody, parenting time
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Parenting Proceeding Affidavit (UCCJEA)</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-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/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">IV-D Benefit Application</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Juvenile Court or CSEA	Sets up the support case with the agency
<a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">Request for Service</a> <a href="https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1">https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/forms/all-forms/domes-tic-relations-and-juvenile-standardized/1</a>	Juvenile Court	Tells the court how to serve the other parent

### COSTS AND FILING

The Juvenile Court is at 1032 South Dunbridge Road, (419) 352-3554. A custody, parentage, visitation, or support case costs \$150 to file. Lawyers must e-file; people without a lawyer file the regular way. If no schedule is set, the court's local visitation schedule applies.

## 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. Each later motion costs \$50, and an agreed change can go in by consent entry for \$63. Support changes can also run through the agency at (419) 354-9270.

## Abuse, neglect, and dependency

These CPS cases are heard in the Juvenile Court. To report concerns about a child's safety, call (419) 354-9669. Cases the county agency files cost nothing. For immediate danger, call 911.

## CONFIRM WITH THE COURT

Wood County does not post its steps for registering an out-of-state order or for relocation notice on the juvenile side. Ask the Juvenile Court at (419) 352-3554 how those filings work before you start.

## PART THREE

# Adoption is handled by the Probate Court.

Stepparent and kinship adoptions go to the Probate Court at the courthouse, before Judge Woessner. Here is the basic shape and cost.

**STEPARENT OR GRANDPARENT****\$338**

Includes a \$250 stepparent home study when ordered

**PRIVATE ADOPTION****\$518**

Agency adoption is \$88; adult is \$85

**FOREIGN RECOGNITION****\$45**

Or \$70 with a final decree

**1****File the petition in Probate**

Open the file, complete the background checks, and file the Petition for Adoption with the child's birth certificate. Probate is at the courthouse, 2nd floor, (419) 354-9230.

**2****Address consent**

The other parent's consent is usually needed. The court can waive it if a parent had little or no contact, or gave no support, for the year before filing.

**3****Complete the home study**

A stepparent or grandparent case usually needs a home study. The court lists a \$250 stepparent study fee. An adult adoption needs no study.

**4****Attend the hearing**

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

## PART FOUR

# How Gavvl Law can help in Wood 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 Wood 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 10, 2026 from official court sources. Court fees, forms, and procedures change. Always confirm current fees and requirements with the Wood 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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