



Family Law Guide

2026

This guide provides general information to help you understand common family-law processes. It is not legal advice. Every case is different. If you have a question about your situation, ask your attorney.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

If you believe someone may be monitoring your phone or computer, consider using a safer device (a friend's phone or a library computer) and changing passwords when it is safe to do so.

Quick Start: Do These 5 Things First

1. Complete your intake questionnaire fully and honestly.
2. Gather the documents in the Master Checklist and upload them in one place (our client portal is best).
3. Write a short timeline of key dates (marriage/separation, moves, job changes, major incidents, children's schedules).
4. Decide your top 3 goals (and what you can live with) so we can negotiate efficiently.
5. Avoid Common Traps: posting about your case online, angry texting, or making major financial changes without talking to your attorney.

Cost-Control Tip:

Organization saves money. When documents are complete and easy to review, your attorney spends less time chasing information and more time solving the problem.

Working With EQUES®

What You Should Expect

- Clear explanations of your options and the steps ahead.
- Respectful communication and professionalism.
- Confidential handling of your information.
- Transparent billing practices and advance notice if big steps may increase cost.
- A plan for next actions after major milestones (filing, hearings, mediation, settlement).

Your Responsibilities

What We Need From You

- Tell the truth and share complete information, even if you think it is embarrassing or unhelpful.
- Respond to document requests promptly.
- Use the agreed communication channel (portal/email) and keep messages focused on decisions and facts.

- Follow court orders and deadlines. If you cannot, tell your attorney immediately.
- Keep children out of adult conflict and avoid using them as messengers.

Communication Standards

- Your attorney is your primary point of contact. They may delegate tasks to a paralegal or assistant.
- Avoid contacting multiple offices or staff for the same issue, this creates duplication and delay.
- Batch questions when possible (*one email with a list beats five separate messages*).
- Use written communication for key facts and schedule changes to reduce misunderstandings.

Billing, Retainers, and Cost Control

Family law matters can be billed hourly (often with a retainer) or, in some limited situations, as a flat fee (for example, some dissolutions). Costs are driven primarily by complexity and conflict.

- **Retainer Basics:** A retainer is money held in trust and billed against as work is performed. Any unused amount is typically refunded at the end of the matter (subject to your fee agreement).
- **Flat Fees:** A flat fee is paid up front for an agreed scope of work and is typically not refundable once work begins.
- **What Increases Cost:** Emergency filings, missing financial information, repeated schedule disputes, and high-conflict communication.
- **What Reduces Cost:** Early document gathering, realistic goals, and steady progress through negotiation or mediation.



Master Checklist

Bring what you have. If you don't have something, tell us that. Missing documents are common, but surprises are expensive.



Identity and Case Documents

- ☐ Government-issued photo ID
- ☐ Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- ☐ Any prior court orders, agreements, or pending court paperwork
- ☐ A list of addresses for both parties and the children for the last 5 years (if available)
- ☐ Income
- ☐ Recent pay stubs (last 30–90 days)
- ☐ W-2s/1099s (last 1–3 years)
- ☐ Tax returns with schedules (last 1–3 years)
- ☐ Proof of bonuses, commissions, overtime, unemployment, disability, retirement, or other income

Assets and Debts

- ☐ Bank statements (checking/savings)
- ☐ Retirement and investment statements (401(k), IRA, pensions, brokerage)
- ☐ Real estate documents (deeds, mortgage statements, property tax/insurance)
- ☐ Vehicle titles/loan statements
- ☐ Credit card statements, student loans, personal loans, medical bills

- ☐ Business records if self-employed (profit & loss, business tax returns, business bank statements)

Children and Parenting

(if applicable)

- ☐ Current parenting schedule (overnights matter)
- ☐ School/daycare contact info and calendars
- ☐ Health insurance cards and premium cost (show what portion is for the child)
- ☐ Childcare invoices/receipts; extracurricular cost information
- ☐ A list of key child-related concerns (health, counseling, special needs, safety issues)

Evidence and Record-Keeping

- ☐ Keep records factual and organized (dates, times, locations).
- ☐ Save screenshots of key messages with date/time visible.
- ☐ Avoid editing or altering evidence; preserve originals.

Do not overwhelm your attorney; send the strongest, most relevant items and keep the rest organized if needed.

Which Path Are You On?

In Ohio, there are three different ways you can become divorced. They are commonly known as Contested and Uncontested Divorce (two types of Divorce) and Dissolution. At the end of all three, your marriage WILL be terminated, assuming everything goes to plan. But there are important differences.



Contested Divorce

A Contested Divorce is likely what you think about when you hear the word “divorce” – court hearings, attorneys, testimony, exhibits, the works. Contested divorces can range from easy to extremely difficult and extremely ugly. In an easy divorce, the parties (you and your spouse) are able to agree on most issues but have some minor disagreements – the exact amount of child support or spousal support, division of property, etc. In a difficult divorce, everything is on the table – perhaps one of you doesn’t think spousal support or child support should be paid at all, or you believe your children are not safe in the custody of your partner. In either case, all of your disagreements have to be presented to the court, who will decide for you.

Uncontested Divorce

An Uncontested Divorce is a very uncommon kind of divorce because it only occurs in very limited circumstances. In a normal, Contested Divorce, both parties participate. This ensures the case keeps moving. An Uncontested Divorce only ever happens when the other party decides not to participate at all. Back in the day, a divorce could be stalled indefinitely by one party simply choosing not to participate. That issue has been adjusted since then, but due to issues of fundamental rights, an Uncontested Divorce has a special procedure that must be followed, and that procedure differs from county to county. Also, many judges aren’t comfortable with Uncontested Divorces, and will differ in what they will and will not order as a result. One judge may allow the participating party to present evidence of debts, order payments, and dispose of property; a different

judge may pronounce you divorced, and nothing further, leaving you open to potential civil claims in the future. Be sure to consult with a knowledgeable attorney to understand your local judge or judges.

Dissolution

A Dissolution is a much simpler, much quicker version of a divorce. At the end, your marriage will be terminated, custody and visitation will be ordered, and property divided. The key difference between a Dissolution and the two types of Divorce is this – in a Dissolution, both parties must agree THE ENTIRE TIME. Typically, the parties talk and come to an agreement, and lay that agreement out to the attorney, who will fill out all of the proper paperwork and make sure the dissolution is filed and accepted by the court. Disagreement may happen at any point in this process and as long as the disagreements are able to be smoothed out, the dissolution can continue. However, if the parties get to the final hearing and one party tells the court that they are dissatisfied with the agreement, or refuses to finalize it, then the process has to start all over again as a Contested Divorce. That means a new filing fee, a longer timeline, and more attorney's fees. A Dissolution is typically only advisable if you truly believe you can be agreed from beginning through the end.

Step-by-Step Process Timeline

Divorce

It is difficult to describe a "typical" divorce timeline, because many divorces differ in their needs and complexity. Some divorces may have children involved, some not. The more property you own that needs divided, the longer and more involved your divorce may be. At any time in the process, an agreement

can be reached and filed with the court, who will either schedule a final hearing or convert the next hearing into the final. But if the case is going to go all the way to trial, you can expect some version of the following:

- On Day 1 the Complaint is filed, along with all necessary documentation (See next bullet point). As with all civil cases, the other party has 28 days to file an Answer. If they do not file an Answer within that period, the case becomes eligible to be labeled Uncontested and proceed on that basis.
- If they do file an Answer, you can expect one or more "pretrial" hearings to be scheduled in the coming months. The exact timing of these pretrials depends on the court's schedule and caseload, but an initial pretrial can be expected in 8-16 weeks after the Answer is filed, with one or more follow-up pretrials within a few months after.
- The follow-up hearings may have different names – status conference, case management conference, etc. – and be focused on different topics.
- A "final pretrial" and "trial" will also be scheduled, somewhere around one year from Day 1. These dates may or may not go forward depending on the progress the case is making, but judicial guidance from the Ohio Supreme Court strongly encourages judges to make a case shorter than 18 months from filing. If your case progresses that long, you may run the risk of having your case involuntarily dismissed, forcing you to start over at Day 1.

During this whole process, your case will be undergoing a side-process called "Discovery." By rule, each side in any case is entitled to discovery, which applies to certain categories of documents and information. You may receive questions called

“Interrogatories” that are broad in scope, and others called “Admissions” that are very narrow in scope. You may receive “Requests for Production of Documents” asking that you turn over specific documents relating to certain topics. You may be asked to attend “Depositions,” which are like mini-trials – you will be asked to testify, and that testimony is binding, with the potential of being brought back later to nail down facts or establish inconsistencies.

Dissolution

A Dissolution timeline is much shorter than that of a divorce. Once all of the proper documents have been filed with the court, the court will schedule a Dissolution hearing within 90 days. At the Dissolution hearing, the court will review the agreement with the parties, ensure that they understand the implications of the agreement, and ask if they consent to it. Once both parties have consented, the court will adopt the agreement as an Order, and the divorce will be granted.

Marital vs. Separate Property Explanation

Marital versus Separate property can be a confusing topic, because it has many twists and turns.

The basic foundation of marital property in Ohio is this, any property that is obtained by the marriage or during the marriage, by either party, is presumed to be marital property. Buy a house together? Marital property, no matter whose name is on the deed and/or mortgage. Buy a new set of silverware? Marital property. New lawnmower? Marital property. All marital property is subject to equitable division by the court.

However, there are notable exceptions to the presumption of marital property. First, by law, there are certain categories that are exempt from being considered marital property. These include inheritances of any kind, and gifts that are given specifically to one party and not to the marriage.

Beyond the exceptions, it is also possible to overcome or “defeat” the presumption that property is marital property. This is by the concept of “traceability.” “Traceability” refers to the process of analyzing each piece of marital property and how that property came to be a part of the marriage in the first place. If property is brought into the marriage by only one person, used by only one person, and paid for by only one person, that property has been “traced” to one of the parties, and becomes eligible to be labeled as “separate property” not subject to division. This process is very detail-oriented and very liable to being altered by very minor differences, which means the process of traceability can become very

expensive very quickly. Consult with your attorney to understand whether your property is traceable, and whether the value of the property is enough to justify the expense undertaken in tracing that property.

Separate property is any property that is not considered marital. The clearest type of separate property is property brought into the marriage, i.e. that was obtained before the marriage. Even if you are a couple at the time the property is acquired, it does not become marital property after marriage. So, if you and your partner purchase a house “together” but only one of you is named on the deed, that person owns the house as separate property. Separate property is subject to the opposite of the traceability process – if property brought into the marriage is paid for or improved by marital funds, some portion of that separate property becomes marital, and subject to division. The clearest example of this is mortgage payments – if a house is brought into the marriage and paid for by marital funds, i.e. from a joint account, the amount paid with marital funds is marital property, and subject to division. But this also becomes very expensive very quickly. It is important to consult with your attorney closely to understand the exact status of your property.

Financial Disclosure Guidance

There are a few rules of thumb for financial disclosure, and the specifics depend on what stage of the process your divorce is in.

With respect to Category One of the necessary documents (see above) you simply need to answer or fill out the prompts to the absolute best of your knowledge and ability. The information contained in your affidavits will establish the baseline of that information to the court. If you contradict that information later, that will hurt your credibility.

With respect to Category Two of the necessary documents, the rule of thumb is to turn over absolutely everything you have to your attorney, who will decide what the other side is entitled to have, and what they are not. There are a number of rules governing the discovery process, many of which adjust or restrict what the other side is or is not entitled to.

The most important part of financial disclosure is be open, honest, and forthright. Trying to hide assets can impact your credibility with the court, costing you in serious ways, and if the conduct is egregious enough, the court is empowered to award MORE than the value of assets hidden as a penalty.

What to Expect in Mediation

Mediation is a pre-court or out-of-court process that focuses on bringing the parties together to understand whether an agreement can be reached, and what form that agreement will take.

Mediation can be requested by the parties or ordered by the court. Sometimes mediation is just for the parties, other times attorneys are welcome or encouraged as well. Some courts offer mediation paid for in whole or in part by the court; other courts have no such programs, and the parties have to pay the cost of mediation. It is important to be willing to attend mediation, especially if children are involved, even if you think it is pointless. Divorce courts are very keen on establishing a cooperative relationship between the parties, frequently referred to as “co-parenting.” The party who is more willing to engage in co-parenting is the party who will often be favored by the court.

Court Expectations and Etiquette

Courts have moved away from the strict suits-and-hats policy you see in Columbo or Law and Order.

The same goes for formality – many courts are much less formal than they once were. But that doesn't mean you should show up to court in just anything, or act however you want. Your appearance and demeanor reflect who you are as a person – if you look or act shifty, the court may perceive you as being dishonest. And if your clothing is dirty or stained, the court may perceive that you are less reliable as a parent, or less willing to act in the best interest of your child/ren.

Glossary of Common Terms

Discovery: the process of information-gathering. Both sides are entitled to full disclosure, and discovery is the disclosure process.

Custody: the right or authority to make decisions for a ward or minor

Residential Parent: the parent whose address is the child or children's address

Residential Parent for School Placement Purposes: the parent whose address is used to enroll the child/ren in school

Visitation: quality time between parent and child. Also known as parenting time.

Parenting Time: quality time between parent and child. Also known as visitation.

Parental Rights and Responsibilities: an umbrella term that encompasses parenting time/visitation, residence, and custody, as well as any and all other privileges and protections that come with being a parent.

Trust Account: an account that belongs to the client and is held and managed by the firm. The client pays into the trust account, and the firm is entitled to payment from that account only when work has been completed.

How Fees, Retainers, and Billing Work at EQUES®

Divorce: Because a Divorce is a contested process with a large variety of unexpected variables, and typically heavily time-consuming, it is EQUES firm policy to start with a retainer. A retainer is an up-front payment that is billed against on a monthly basis, based on the amount of work done in that month and the hourly rate of your attorney. At the end of your case, whatever amount is left in your trust account will be refunded back to you. Retainers are typically hourly or green hourly. An hourly retainer is paid once, depleted all the way to zero, then replenished – this means that, at some point after paying a large chunk of money, you will likely be asked to replenish the retainer amount entirely. Under a green hourly fee structure, you are obligated to replenish the retainer by the amount charged against it that month. This means you must pay a smaller, more manageable sum on a more regular basis, rather than being asked for the entire retainer amount all at once. Retainer amounts vary based on the needs and complexity of the case and the knowledge and experience of the attorney and typically range from \$7,500 to \$12,500.

Dissolution: While a dissolution is typically a quicker, more streamlined, and less-intensive process than a contested divorce, it can still involve unpredictability. For that reason, EQUES handles dissolutions on an hourly basis and requires an initial retainer ranging from \$2,500 to \$3,500, depending on the attorney's experience and the geographic area.

In dissolutions, circumstances can change quickly, and disagreements arise, even when both parties initially believe they are in full agreement. However, when spouses are able to maintain cooperation and resolve issues efficiently, a dissolution can often be completed in as little as 90 days and at a significantly lower overall cost than a traditional divorce.

Attorney Communication Expectations and Boundaries

Communication with your attorney is a delicate balance to strike. On the one hand, you need to keep your attorney apprised of everything that is changing in your life, the earlier the better. On the other hand, your case is just one of many on your attorney's caseload, so be considerate of their time and energy when you reach out. When in doubt, leave a voicemail, or contact by text, email or the best way is through your account portal.

Custody & Parenting Time

Help parents understand rights, responsibilities, and court considerations.



Legal Custody vs. Physical Custody

Ohio law distinguishes between legal custody and physical custody, terms that are often misunderstood.

Legal Custody

Legal custody refers to the authority to make major decisions on behalf of a child. These decisions typically include:

- Education (school selection, special education services)
- Medical care (non-emergency treatment, mental health services)
- Religious upbringing
- Extracurricular activities that significantly impact the child's schedule

In many cases, Ohio courts award shared legal custody, meaning both parents retain equal decision-making authority, even if the child primarily resides with one parent. Shared legal custody requires parents to communicate and cooperate effectively, as unilateral decisions may violate court orders.

Physical Custody

(Parenting Time)

Physical custody concerns where the child lives and how parenting time is divided. Ohio courts may designate one parent as the residential parent for school enrollment and administrative purposes, even when parenting time is relatively balanced. Physical custody does not determine parental importance or love; it is a logistical framework designed to provide stability. Parenting time schedules vary widely depending on the child's age, parental availability, proximity of residences, and other practical factors.

Best-Interest-of-the-Child Factors

All custody and parenting time decisions in Ohio are guided by one overarching principle: the best interest of the child. Courts are required by statute to evaluate specific factors when determining custody arrangements.

Key Best-Interest Factors

Ohio courts commonly consider:

- The child's relationship with each parent
- Each parent's ability to care for the child
- The child's adjustment to home, school, and community
- The mental and physical health of all parties
- Which parent is more likely to honor and facilitate parenting time
- Any history of domestic violence, abuse, or neglect
- The wishes of the child, if the child is mature enough to express a reasoned preference

No single factor is controlling. Courts evaluate the totality of circumstances, with the goal of promoting stability, safety, and healthy development.

Parental Conduct Matters

Courts closely observe parental behavior during custody proceedings. Actions that demonstrate cooperation, consistency, and child-focused decision-making are viewed favorably. Conversely, attempts to alienate the child from the other parent, disregard court orders, or involve the child in adult conflict may negatively impact custody outcomes. If you're fighting in front of the court, the court will assume you're fighting in front of the kids, too.

Standard Parenting Schedules in Ohio

While Ohio courts do not impose a single mandatory parenting schedule, many counties rely on standard or model schedules as a starting point. These schedules are often modified to fit a family's specific needs.

Common Parenting Time Structures

Some commonly used schedules include:

- **Alternating Weekends:** One parent has the child during the week; the other has parenting time every other weekend.
- **Midweek Visits:** A midweek overnight or evening visit supplements alternating weekends.
- **2-2-5-5 or 2-2-3 Schedules:** Often used when parents live close together and seek more equal parenting time.
- **Week-on/Week-off:** Typically used for older children when parents live near each other and can support school continuity.

Courts consider the child's age and developmental needs when selecting or approving schedules. Younger children may benefit from more frequent contact with each parent, while older children may tolerate longer stretches in each household. In addition, most counties have a Local Rule that the court has adopted with a "model parenting time schedule." If you can't agree on a schedule, the Local Rule is the most likely schedule the court will impose on you.

School Year, Summer, Holiday Schedules

Parenting schedules often change depending on the time of year. Courts typically divide parenting time into school year, summer, and holiday components.

School-Year Schedules

During the school year, stability and routine are prioritized. Parenting time often aligns with school calendars, homework responsibilities, and extracurricular activities. Transportation responsibilities should be clearly defined to avoid conflict.

Summer Parenting Time

Summer schedules frequently allow extended parenting time with each parent. This may include:

- Alternating weeks
 - Extended uninterrupted blocks for travel or vacations
 - Adjusted schedules to accommodate camps or childcare
- Parents are usually required to provide advance notice of travel plans and vacations.

Holiday Schedules

Holiday parenting time often supersedes regular schedules. Commonly divided holidays include:

- Thanksgiving
- Winter break (Christmas and New Year's)
- Spring break
- Mother's Day and Father's Day
- Birthdays

Holiday schedules typically alternate annually or divide holidays into specific time blocks. Clear, written holiday provisions help prevent misunderstandings and last-minute disputes.

Communication Guidelines for Co-Parent

Effective communication is critical to successful co-parenting. Courts expect parents to communicate respectfully and consistently in matters affecting their children.

Best Practices for Co-Parent Communication

- Keep communication child-focused and businesslike
- Avoid discussing adult disputes with or through the child
- Use written communication when appropriate to reduce misunderstandings
- Respond within a reasonable time frame
- Avoid hostile, accusatory, or inflammatory language

Courts may consider communication patterns when evaluating custody modifications or enforcement issues.

Tools/Apps for Co-Parenting

Technology can help reduce conflict and improve accountability between co-parents. Ohio courts frequently recommend or order the use of co-parenting communication platforms.

Commonly Used Co-Parenting Apps

OurFamilyWizard

- Message tracking
- Shared calendars
- Expense tracking
- Document storage
- Tone-monitoring features

Talking Parents

- Recorded communications
- Shared calendars
- Payment tracking
- Court-admissible records

These tools create a clear, time-stamped record of communication, which can be helpful if disputes arise. They also reduce direct conflict by providing structured, neutral communication channels.

Tips for Minimizing Conflict

High-conflict custody disputes can be emotionally damaging for children. Courts expect parents to take reasonable steps to minimize conflict.

Practical Conflict-Reduction Strategies

- Follow court orders precisely, even if you disagree
- Do not involve children in disputes or legal proceedings
- Avoid confrontations during exchanges
- Be flexible when appropriate, but document agreements
- Seek mediation or counseling when communication breaks down

Demonstrating a willingness to cooperate can significantly improve both court outcomes and the child's emotional well-being.

Documentation & Record-Keeping Suggestions

Proper documentation is essential in custody and parenting time matters. Courts rely heavily on objective evidence when resolving disputes.

What Parents Should Document

- Parenting time exchanges
- Missed or late visits
- Communication attempts and responses
- School and medical records
- Extracurricular schedules
- Expenses related to the child

Documentation should be factual, concise, and free from emotional commentary. Well-organized records can support enforcement actions, modification requests, or defenses against unfounded allegations. All your best documents should be sent to your attorney for evaluation. Remember to strike the balance – if you're on the fence about a document, let your attorney decide if they can use it. But don't overload them, either; if you give them 500 documents when 100 will do, they are much more likely to make a mistake or miss something.

Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

In some custody cases, the court appoints a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to represent the child's best interests.

Role of the Guardian ad Litem

A GAL may:

- Interview parents, children, and relevant third parties
- Review school, medical, and counseling records
- Observe parent-child interactions
- Make recommendations to the court regarding custody and parenting time

The GAL does not represent either parent and is not the child's attorney. Instead, the GAL serves as an independent investigator and advisor to the court.

Working Effectively with a GAL

Parents should:

- Be cooperative and respectful
- Provide requested information promptly
- Avoid attempting to influence or manipulate the GAL
- Focus on the child's needs rather than parental grievances

Courts often give significant weight to GAL recommendations, especially in high-conflict cases. The best interest of the child controls for custody, and the GAL represents the child, so they can give the best and most neutral assessment of your child's living situation.

Expect to pay the GAL – typically, a court will order the party who requests a GAL to pay for it, or they will split the cost between the two parties.

How Child Support Is Calculated in Ohio

If you're going through a separation or divorce, it's normal to wonder: "How do they decide the child support amount?" In Ohio, child support is usually calculated using a state formula (often called the child support guidelines). The court or child support agency looks at both parents' finances and certain child-related costs, then uses a worksheet to estimate a fair amount.



How Ohio Calculates Child Support

Ohio typically uses a guideline worksheet to calculate child support. The worksheet considers things like:

- Each parent's income
- How many children need support
- Who pays for health insurance
- Childcare costs (like daycare)
- How much parenting time each parent has (overnights can matter)
- Certain adjustments and credits allowed by law

After the worksheet is completed, it produces a presumed child support amount. That amount is often what gets ordered—unless the court finds a legal reason to adjust it.

Income Considerations

What "Income" Usually Includes

Ohio looks at each parent's income from all sources, not just wages. That can include:

- Paychecks (hourly or salary)
- Overtime and bonuses (sometimes)
- Self-employment income
- Commissions and tips
- Unemployment benefits
- Some disability benefits
- Some retirement income
- Certain other regular payments

When Income can be "Imputed"

If a parent is unemployed or underemployed on purpose, the court can sometimes assign ("impute") income based on things like:

- Work history

- Job skills and education
- Local job opportunities
- Earning ability

Deductions and Adjustments

Certain items may affect the final number, such as:

- Spousal support paid or received (in some situations)
- Other child support orders for other children
- Local taxes and some mandatory deductions

Health Insurance Requirements

Ohio courts usually require that health insurance be provided for the child if it is available at a reasonable cost.

Common outcomes:

- One parent is ordered to keep the child on their employer plan.
- If neither parent has affordable coverage, the order may address alternative options (like marketplace coverage or Medicaid if eligible).

If a parent pays the child's health insurance premium, the worksheet may give that parent a credit or adjustment, depending on how the cost is handled.

Also, orders often address uninsured medical expenses, such as co-pays and deductibles, and how the parents will split them.

Extraordinary Expenses Childcare

Work-related childcare (daycare, before/after school care, summer care) is commonly included. The worksheet can account for:

- Regular daycare costs
- Babysitting needed for work or job training

Medical Expenses

In addition to insurance, support orders often address how parents share:

- Co-pays
- Prescriptions

- Deductibles
- Therapy or special medical needs (when appropriate)

Extracurricular Activities

Sports, music lessons, clubs, camps, and similar activities may be handled in different ways:

- Sometimes these are paid from the regular support amount.
- Sometimes the court orders a separate split if the cost is high and the activity is reasonable and agreed on (or clearly in the child's best interest).

Enforcement and Modification Guidelines

If child support isn't paid, Ohio can enforce it through tools such as:

- Income withholding (garnishment from paychecks)
- Intercepting tax refunds
- Suspending certain licenses (driver's, professional, recreational)
- Reporting to credit bureaus
- Court action for contempt in some cases

Child support can usually be modified if there is a significant change, such as:

- Job loss or major income change
- Big changes in childcare or insurance costs
- A change in parenting time or living arrangements

Often, the best first step is to request a review through the CSEA or file a motion in court (depending on how your order was issued).

Tip:

Don't wait. If your income changes, ask about modification quickly—support can keep adding up even if circumstances change.

Checklist: Financial Documents You May Need

Having good paperwork makes the process faster and more accurate. Common documents include:

Income

- ☐ Pay stubs (recent—often the last 30–90 days)
- ☐ W-2s (last 1–3 years)
- ☐ Tax returns (last 1–3 years, including schedules)
- ☐ Proof of bonuses, commissions, or overtime
- ☐ Proof of unemployment, disability, or retirement income

Self-Employment (if applicable)

- ☐ Profit and loss statements
- ☐ Business tax returns
- ☐ Business bank statements
- ☐ Records of business expenses

Health Insurance and Medical

- ☐ Proof of coverage for the child
- ☐ Monthly premium cost (showing how much is for the child)
- ☐ Out-of-pocket medical costs (recent)
- ☐ Child-related costs

Childcare Invoices/Receipts

- ☐ Proof of work-related childcare needs (schedule, employer letter if needed)
- ☐ Extracurricular cost receipts (if you are asking the court to address them)

Other Helpful Items

- ☐ Parenting time schedule (overnights matter)
- ☐ Any existing child support orders (for other children)
- ☐ Proof of spousal support paid/received (if applicable)

Common Misconceptions

Misconception #1: “Child support is just based on the paying parent’s income.”

Not usually. Ohio generally looks at both parents’ incomes.

Misconception #2: “If we share custody 50/50, nobody pays child support.”

Not always. Even with equal time, income differences and costs can still lead to a support order.

Misconception #3: “If I lose my job, I can stop paying.”

No. The order stays in place until it is changed officially. You should seek modification right away.

Misconception #4: “The other parent has to show receipts for every dollar I pay.”

Typically, child support is meant to help cover the child’s needs overall (housing, food, utilities, clothes). It’s not usually tracked like a reimbursement account.

Misconception #5: “We can agree to any amount and the court has to approve it.”

Courts often want the guideline worksheet completed and may not approve an agreement that doesn’t meet legal standards.

Spousal Support in Ohio

Spousal support (sometimes called “alimony”) is money one spouse may pay the other after a divorce or legal separation. In Ohio, spousal support is not automatic. It depends on the facts of your marriage and each person’s financial situation.



When Spousal Support Applies

Spousal support may come up when:

- One spouse earned much more than the other during the marriage, or
- One spouse stayed home (or worked less) to raise children or support the other’s career, or
- One spouse needs time and help to become financially independent (for example, through job training).

Courts are more likely to consider spousal support when there is a:

- Longer marriage
- Big difference in income
- Big difference in earning ability
- History of one spouse depending on the other financially

Spousal support can be ordered in:

- Divorce cases
- Legal separation cases

It may be set by:

- Agreement between spouses (and approved by the court), or
- A court order after a hearing

What Courts Consider

Ohio courts look at many factors. The goal is fairness, not punishment.

Common factors include:

- Income of both spouses (from all sources)
- Earning ability (including education, skills, work history)
- Ages and health of both spouses
- Retirement benefits
- Length of the marriage
- Standard of living during the marriage
- Education level of each spouse
- Assets and debts divided in the divorce
- Contribution to the other spouse’s education/career (example: paying for school)
- Time needed to get training or education to find work
- Tax consequences of support (important)
- Any other factor the court finds relevant

How Spousal Support Is Determined

Unlike child support, Ohio does not have one required statewide “calculator” that guarantees the same number every time. Judges have discretion, meaning they decide what is fair based on the factors above. In practice, courts often look at:

- Each spouse’s monthly income and expenses
- The gap between incomes
- Whether one spouse truly needs support and the other can afford to pay it
- Whether support should be temporary (rehabilitative) or longer-term

Support can be paid:

- Monthly (most common)
- In other schedules as ordered or agreed

Duration Considerations

How Long It Lasts

There is no single rule for how long spousal support lasts. Duration often depends on:

- Length of the marriage (longer marriages often mean longer support)
- Ability to become self-supporting
- Whether a spouse needs time to finish school or training
- Age and health, especially if returning to work is difficult
- Child-related responsibilities that affect a spouse’s ability to work

Spousal support may end:

- After a set number of months or years (common)
- At the death of either spouse (typical)
- Sometimes upon the recipient’s remarriage (often, but it depends on the order)
- By court order after a modification (if allowed)

Important: The court order should clearly state what events end support.

Tax Implications

Tax rules can be confusing, so here is the general idea:

- In many modern divorces, spousal support is not deductible for the person paying it and is not taxable income for the person receiving it (federal taxes).
- However, exceptions can exist depending on when the order was created and whether it has been changed.

Because tax laws can change and individual situations vary, it’s smart to confirm the tax treatment with:

- A family law attorney, and/or
- A tax professional

Modification Rules

Can It Be Changed Later?

Sometimes, yes—but not always.

In Ohio, spousal support usually can be modified only if:

- The divorce decree or separation order specifically allows the court to modify support, and
- There has been a substantial change in circumstances that was not expected at the time of the order.

Examples of changes that may justify a modification:

- Job loss or major income change
- Serious illness or disability
- Retirement (depending on facts)
- Major change in expenses

Also: Some orders are written as non-modifiable, meaning the amount and/or duration cannot be changed.

Checklist: Financial Records to Gather

Having complete financial records helps your attorney (and the court) understand what is fair.

Income

- ☐ Recent pay stubs (often last 30–90 days)
- ☐ W-2s (last 1–2 years)
- ☐ Tax returns (last 1–3 years, including schedules)
- ☐ Proof of bonuses, commissions, overtime
- ☐ Proof of unemployment, disability, pension, Social Security (if applicable)

Monthly Living Expenses

- ☐ Housing: mortgage/rent statements, property tax, insurance
- ☐ Utilities: electric, gas, water, internet/phone
- ☐ Transportation: car payment, insurance, fuel, maintenance
- ☐ Health insurance premiums and medical costs
- ☐ Childcare costs (if relevant)
- ☐ Debt payments: credit cards, student loans, personal loans

Assets

- ☐ Bank statements (checking/savings)
- ☐ Retirement statements (401(k), pension, IRA)
- ☐ Investment accounts
- ☐ Real estate documents (deeds, mortgage statements, appraisals)
- ☐ Vehicle titles/loan statements

Debts

- ☐ Credit card statements
- ☐ Student loan statements
- ☐ Medical bills
- ☐ Any other personal or joint debts

If Self-Employed

- ☐ Profit and loss statements
- ☐ Business tax returns
- ☐ Business bank/credit card statements
- ☐ Records of business expenses

FAQ

Q: Is spousal support guaranteed in Ohio?

A: No. It depends on the marriage facts and each spouse's finances.

Q: Can we agree on spousal support without a judge deciding it?

A: Yes. Many couples reach an agreement, but the court typically must approve it.

Q: Does cheating affect spousal support?

A: Usually, spousal support focuses on finances and fairness. In some cases, behavior may be considered, but it is not the main factor in most support decisions.

Q: If I remarry, does support stop automatically?

A: Often it stops, but not always. It depends on what the court order says.

Q: If my ex gets a better job, can I lower support?

A: Possibly—if the order allows modification and the change is substantial.

Q: Can spousal support and child support both be ordered?

A: Yes. They serve different purposes and are calculated differently.

Q: What if my spouse is capable of working but chooses not to?

A: Courts may consider earning ability and may assign ("impute") income in some situations.

Domestic Violence Civil Protection Orders (CPOs) in Ohio

*This handout is general legal information—not legal advice.
If you're in immediate danger, call 911.*

A Domestic Violence Civil Protection Order (DV CPO) is a court order that can require an abusive person to stop contact and can add protections like moving them out of a shared home, temporary parenting provisions, and other safety-related orders.



Safety First

If you're afraid someone is monitoring your phone or computer, consider using a safer device (a friend's phone, a library computer) and clearing browsing history. Ohio Legal Help includes tech-safety tips and an "exit" button on its protection-order pages.

Immediate support (24/7):

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 | Text START to 88788 | Chat available
- Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN): 1-800-934-9840

(referrals + help finding local programs)

- Find a local program/shelter in Ohio: ODVN "Find Help" directory (search by location)

What qualifies for a DV CPO in Ohio Relationship Requirement

DV CPOs generally apply when the respondent is a "family or household member," including: a spouse/former spouse; a person you lived with as a spouse; certain relatives who live(d) with the respondent; or the other

parent (or putative parent) of your child.

Ohio also has a Dating Violence CPO option when the relationship is a qualifying dating relationship within the past 12 months (and the respondent is an adult).

Conduct Requirement

Ohio's DV statute includes (among other things):

- Attempting to cause or recklessly causing bodily injury
- Threats of force that place someone in fear of imminent serious physical harm (and certain related offenses, including stalking)
- Certain child abuse-type conduct
- Sexually oriented offenses

Process for Filing Step-by-Step

Ohio Legal Help summarizes the typical process like this:

Step 1: Get the Forms

- Ohio Supreme Court protection-order forms are available online.
- Ohio Legal Help also has a Form Assistant and county-specific resources.

Step 2: Fill Out Your Petition Carefully

Include:

- The most recent incidents (dates, locations, what happened)
- Any threats, stalking/harassment, injuries, weapons, property damage
- Any history of past incidents you want the court to consider (some courts may limit the case to what you write in the forms)

Step 3: File in the Right Court

Ohio Legal Help advises contacting the Domestic Relations Court in the county where:

- you live, or
- the abuser lives, or
- the abuse happened

Step 4: Ex parte

Emergency Hearing (if requested)

If you request an emergency order, the court must hold an ex parte hearing the same day you file. The respondent does not attend.

Step 5: Service of Process

The court must officially notify the respondent. Ohio Legal Help notes that the first method is typically personal service by the sheriff, and selecting additional methods (like certified mail) may help avoid delays if service fails.

Step 6: Full Hearing

Whether or not an emergency order is granted, the court sets a full hearing, usually within 7–10 business days.

Ohio's statute requires a full hearing within 7 court days if the ex parte order includes certain housing-related relief, and within 10 court days for other ex parte orders.

How Temporary (Ex Parte) Orders Work

At the ex parte hearing, the judge may issue temporary orders if there is "good cause," including immediate and present danger.

Key points:

- Same-day hearing if requested
- If service is delayed or the hearing is continued, the ex parte order generally does not expire just because service didn't happen before the initial hearing date.

What the Judge Can Order (Common Protections)

After an ex parte or full hearing, the court can order many protections, including:

- No abuse / no contact / no threats
- Move-out / stay-away orders for a shared residence (in qualifying household-member cases)
- Temporary parenting orders (in qualifying cases)

- Support-related provisions (in qualifying cases)
- Stay away from home/school/work
- Other equitable relief, including certain property/vehicle provisions
- Companion animal protections
- Wireless number/service transfer in some situations

How Long Does a CPO Last?

A full CPO (not ex parte) is valid until a set date, but generally no longer than 5 years, unless modified/terminated (and it may be renewable).

What to Expect at the Full Hearing

At the full hearing, the respondent may attend. You'll usually need to:

- Testify about what happened
- Provide evidence and (if possible) witnesses
- Show a recent threatening or violent act and risk of future harm

Possible outcomes include:

- A full CPO granted (with specific terms)
- A "consent agreement" (the parties agree to terms; the court may not make findings that violence occurred)
- The petition denied (which can affect what records remain public—ask an advocate or attorney about local practice)

Checklist: Evidence

You do not need every item below—bring what you have.

Incident Documentation

- ☐ Photos of injuries, damaged property, torn clothing
- ☐ Dates/times/locations written out (timeline)
- ☐ Medical records or discharge instructions
- ☐ Police reports, case numbers, 911 call details

Threats / Stalking / Harassment

- ☐ Screenshots of texts, DMs, emails, call logs, voicemails
- ☐ Social media posts/messages (include URLs if possible)
- ☐ Evidence of stalking (photos of vehicles, screenshots of location-sharing, tracking devices—if safe)

Witnesses

- ☐ Names/contact info for anyone who saw/heard abuse or its aftermath
- ☐ Written statements (if a witness can't attend, ask the court/your attorney how statements are handled)

Child-Related Information *(if relevant)*

- ☐ School/daycare details
- ☐ Parenting schedule concerns, pickup/drop-off safety issues

Practical Tips

- ☐ Print 2–3 copies of key documents (one for you, one for the court, one spare)
- ☐ Label exhibits with dates; keep originals safe

Safety Planning Resources

Advocates can help you plan for safer filing and court attendance. Ohio Legal Help recommends talking to a local advocate or lawyer before filing when possible.

Consider:

- A safe way to travel to/from court (ride with someone, change routines)
- A code word with friends/family
- Updating workplace/school security with a copy of the order (if granted)
- Tech safety: passwords, location settings, shared phone plans, device checks
- Address confidentiality options (see below)

Address privacy option (Ohio Safe at Home):

Ohio's Safe at Home program can help eligible survivors keep certain address information confidential in public records. Enrollment is through certified application assistants.

Local Shelters and Hotline Numbers

Because services are county-based, the most reliable way to get local shelter/contact info is through:

- ODVN Find Help directory (search by your area)
- ODVN hotline/referrals: 1-800-934-9840
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 | Text START to 88788

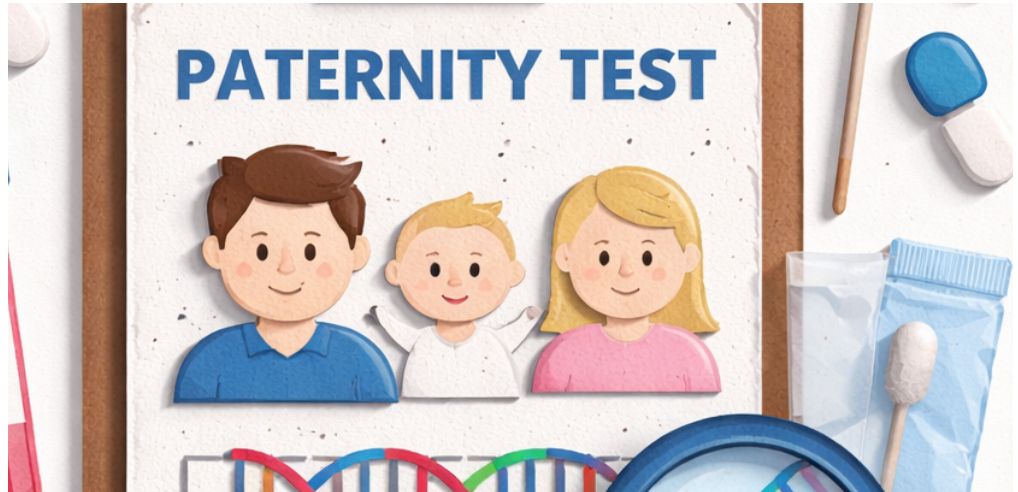
Enforcement

What happens if the order is violated?

- Violating a protection order can be a criminal offense in Ohio.
- Ohio Legal Help also notes you may be able to seek contempt of court in the issuing court (often best done with legal/advocate help).

Paternity

Paternity refers to the legal recognition of a child's father. For unmarried parents, paternity is not automatically established at birth, even if the father is actively involved in the child's life. Legal recognition is required before a father can enforce custody or parenting time rights, and before a court can order child support.



How Paternity is Established

There are several common ways paternity may be established:

Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity (VAP)

The most straightforward method is a voluntary acknowledgment signed by both parents. This form is often completed at the hospital shortly after the child's birth but can also be executed later through the appropriate state agency. Once properly completed and filed, a VAP generally has the same legal effect as a court order establishing paternity.

Administrative Establishment

In some cases, paternity may be established through an administrative process, typically initiated by a child support enforcement agency. This process may involve notice to the alleged

father and, if necessary, genetic testing.

Court Order

When paternity is disputed or unclear, a court may be asked to determine parentage. This often includes DNA testing, which is highly accurate and widely accepted. Once the court enters an order establishing paternity, the father gains legal parental status along with corresponding rights and obligations. Establishing paternity is a foundational step. Without it, a father generally has no enforceable rights to custody or parenting time, and a child may lose access to important benefits such as health insurance coverage, inheritance rights, or Social Security benefits.

Rights of Unmarried Parents

Once paternity is legally established, unmarried parents stand on more equal legal footing, though the path to exercising those rights may differ from that of married parents.

Rights of the Mother

At birth, an unmarried mother is typically presumed to have sole legal and physical custody of the child unless and until a court orders otherwise. This means she initially has the authority to make decisions regarding the child's residence, education, healthcare, and day-to-day care.

Rights of the Father

A father's rights do not automatically vest upon biological parenthood alone. Legal recognition of paternity is required. After paternity is established, a father has the right to seek custody, parenting time, and participation in major decision-making for the child. He also has the right to be notified of and participate in legal proceedings affecting the child.

Equal Standing After Establishment

Importantly, once paternity is established, courts generally evaluate both parents on equal footing. Neither parent is automatically favored based solely on gender or marital status. Instead, decisions are guided by the child's best interests, considering factors such as stability, parental involvement, and the ability to meet the child's needs.

Understanding these rights helps unmarried parents avoid common misconceptions—such as the belief that a father has “no rights” or that a mother's authority is absolute regardless of circumstances.

Custody and Parenting Time Expectations

Custody and parenting time are often the most emotionally charged aspects of paternity matters. The Paternity Packet helps set realistic expectations and explains how courts approach these issues.

Legal Custody vs. Physical Custody

Legal custody refers to the authority to make major decisions about the child's life, including education, healthcare, and religious upbringing. Physical custody refers to where the child lives and who provides day-to-day care. Courts may award joint or sole legal custody, as well as joint or primary physical custody, depending on the circumstances.

Parenting Time (Visitation)

Parenting time outlines when each parent spends time with the child. Schedules may vary widely based on the child's age, the parents' work schedules, geographic proximity, and the child's developmental needs. For infants and young children, courts may favor more frequent, shorter visits to foster bonding, while older children may transition to longer, more structured schedules.

Best Interests of the Child Standard.

All custody and parenting time determinations are guided by the child's best interests. Courts typically consider factors such as:

- Each parent's relationship with the child
- The child's need for stability and continuity
- Each parent's ability to provide a safe, supportive environment
- Willingness of each parent to encourage a relationship with the other parent

Temporary vs. Final Orders.

In many cases, courts issue temporary custody and parenting time orders while the case is pending. These temporary arrangements can significantly influence the final outcome, making early preparation and clarity especially important.

The Paternity Packet emphasizes that custody and parenting time are not about “winning” but about creating a workable, child-centered arrangement that can endure over time.

Child Support Considerations

Child support is a legal obligation designed to ensure that both parents contribute financially to their child's upbringing. Establishing paternity is a prerequisite to any child support order involving an unmarried father.

How Child Support Is Calculated

Most states use statutory guidelines to calculate child support. These guidelines typically consider factors such as:

- Each parent's income
- Parenting time allocation
- Health insurance costs
- Childcare expenses
- Other support obligations

The goal is to provide consistency and predictability while ensuring the child's reasonable needs are met.

Support Is Separate from Parenting Time

A common misconception is that child support is tied to visitation or custody. In reality, child support and parenting time are legally distinct. A parent cannot withhold support because parenting time is denied, nor can parenting time be denied due to nonpayment of support.

Modification and Enforcement.

Child support orders can be modified if there is a substantial change in circumstances, such as job loss,

significant income changes, or changes in parenting time. Support orders are also enforceable through various legal mechanisms, underscoring the importance of accuracy and completeness at the outset.

By addressing child support early and transparently, the Paternity Packet helps reduce future disputes and reinforces the shared financial responsibility of parenthood.

Checklist: Documentation

Accurate documentation is critical to establishing paternity and resolving related issues efficiently. A well-prepared Paternity Packet identifies and organizes the documents most commonly required.

Identification and Vital Records

- ☐ Parents are typically required to provide government-issued identification and the child's birth certificate.
- ☐ If a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity has already been completed, that document is essential.

Financial Information

- ☐ Child support determinations rely heavily on financial disclosures.
- ☐ Common documents include recent pay stubs, tax returns, W-2s or 1099s, and proof of health insurance costs.

Communication and Parenting Records

- ☐ In contested cases, records demonstrating parental involvement—such as communication logs, calendars, or evidence of caregiving responsibilities—may be relevant to custody and parenting time determinations.

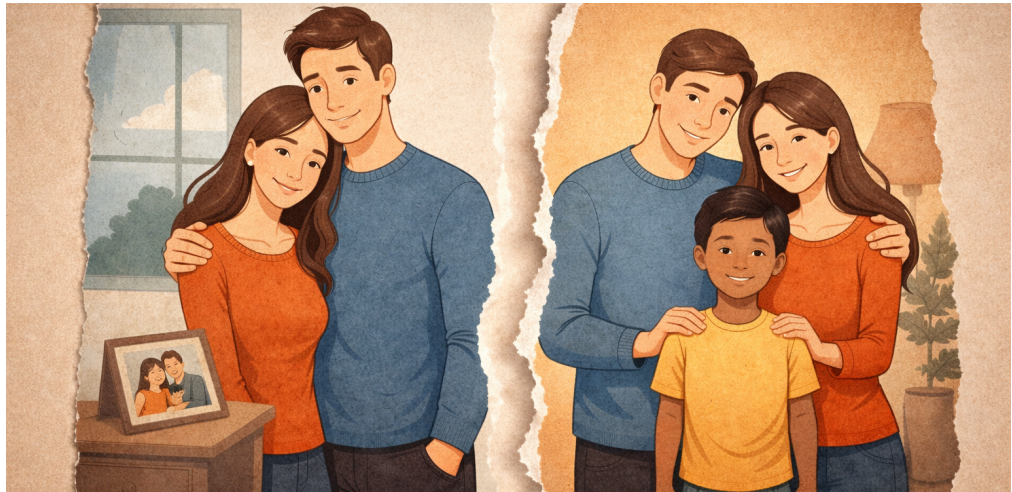
Genetic Testing Results *(If Applicable)*

- ☐ If DNA testing has been conducted, certified results are necessary to establish paternity through administrative or court processes.

Organizing these materials in advance reduces delays, minimizes disputes, and allows legal counsel or the court to focus on substantive issues rather than procedural obstacles.

Adoption in Ohio

Adoption is a meaningful way to build or strengthen a family—and it's also a court-supervised legal process with specific steps. In Ohio, adoptions are generally handled through the Probate Court, and the exact requirements can vary slightly by county, so it's important to follow both Ohio law and your local court's filing instructions.



Types of Adoption in Ohio

Stepparent (and Some Relative) Adoptions

A stepparent adoption creates a full legal parent-child relationship between a stepparent and their spouse's child. These cases often move more efficiently than other adoptions, but they still typically require formal filings, notice, and attention to consent rules.

Agency Adoptions Public or Private

An agency adoption involves a licensed public children's services agency or a private child placing agency. These matters usually include agency casework, matching/placement steps, and required assessments under Ohio's adoption framework.

Private/Independent Adoptions

A private adoption is typically arranged directly between the child's legal parent(s) and the prospective adoptive parent(s), often with attorney involvement (and sometimes with an assessor for the required evaluation). Regardless of the pathway, the Probate Court process and statutory requirements still apply.

Requirements and the Home Study Overview

Ohio requires a court/agency assessment process before an adoption can be finalized (with certain exceptions or streamlined procedures in some stepparent/relative situations).

A typical home study/pre-finalization assessment includes:

- Background and safety checks (as required by Ohio rules and local practice)
- Interviews and home visit(s) to evaluate readiness and the child's best interests
- Review of household information, health information, finances, and references (requirements can differ by adoption type and assessor)

Consent is a central requirement. Ohio law contains detailed rules on who must consent and when consent may be found unnecessary (for example, in certain circumstances involving a parent's lack of meaningful contact or support in the year immediately preceding filing).

Timeline Estimate

What most families can expect

Every case is different, but many Ohio adoptions follow a predictable structure:

1. Preparation & information gathering (documents, initial filings, scheduling the assessment)
2. Assessment/home study and court notices
3. Placement period and post-placement oversight (as applicable)
4. Final hearing and decree

For many non-stepparent adoptions, Ohio practice commonly reflects a six-month placement period before finalization, with stepparent/relative exceptions in certain situations. Some courts also set stepparent adoption hearings based on timing rules tied to the marriage date and service/notice requirements.

Practical Estimate: uncomplicated matters may take several months to a year, while contested consent, interstate issues, or missing-parent notice can extend the timeline.

Financial considerations

Planning with fewer surprises

Costs vary by adoption type, county, and complexity, but often include:

- Court filing fees and certified copies (county-specific)
- Home study/assessment fees (sometimes paid to a private assessor, sometimes through the court/agency)
- Attorney fees (especially in private or contested matters)
- Agency program fees (in some private agency infant adoptions)

Ohio's foster/adopt resources note that private agencies/attorneys may handle adoptions that range widely in cost, and that many expenses in some cases relate to the home study process (background checks, medical forms, fire/safety checks).

Tax Planning

The IRS reports the 2025 federal Adoption Credit limit is \$17,280 per qualifying child (with additional rules/limits that may apply).

Ohio law also requires financial transparency in the adoption case, including a preliminary estimate and a final accounting in many proceedings.

Checklist: Documents

Your county may require additional forms, but many Ohio courts commonly request:

Incident Documentation

- ☐ Petition for Adoption of Minor (Ohio Supreme Court Form 18.0)
- ☐ Certified copy of the child's birth certificate
- ☐ Required notices/entries (hearing notice and related court entries—often from the Ohio Supreme Court form set)
- ☐ Consent forms (when required) or filings asking the court to find consent not required (when legally applicable)
- ☐ Assessment/home study documentation (pre-finalization assessment report)
- ☐ Putative father registry/search documentation (when applicable)
- ☐ Child support agency notice

Practical Tips: Many Probate Courts publish their own filing guides and “what to submit” lists (including e-filing requirements).

Post-Placement Expectations

After a child is placed, the court (and/or agency/assessor) typically conducts post-placement supervision or follow-up as part of the pre-finalization assessment process to confirm the placement remains safe and in the child's best interest.

In many cases, the court will not issue the final decree until the legally required placement/assessment steps are complete.

A Final Note for Families

Adoption is both personal and procedural. Getting the right guidance early—especially on consent, notice, and documentation—can reduce delays and help the process stay focused on the child's best interests.

Ohio Post-Decree Modification in Ohio

(Custody / Parenting Time / Child Support)



What is a “Post-Decree Modification”?

A post-decree modification is a request to change an existing court order after your divorce, dissolution, or parentage case is already final. In Ohio, the most common post-decree changes are:

- Custody / “allocation of parental rights and responsibilities” (including changing the residential parent and legal custodian)
- Parenting time (also called companionship/visitation time)
- Child support (including medical support, tax exemption, and child-related expenses)

Key idea: The court is not “redoing” the case—Ohio courts generally require a legally valid reason and proof.

When is Modification Allowed in Ohio?

A. Changing Custody / Changing the Residential Parent

Ohio courts cannot modify a custody decree unless:

1. There has been a change in circumstances since the prior order (or facts were unknown at the time), and
2. The change is necessary to serve the child’s best interest.

Ohio also has a built-in “stability” rule: the court keeps the current residential parent unless (a) the change is in the child’s best interest and one of these applies:

- The current residential parent agrees (or both parents agree in shared parenting), or
- The child has been integrated into the other parent’s family with consent, or

- The benefit of changing outweighs the harm of changing the child's environment.

Plain English: To change custody, you usually need to show (1) something significant changed and (2) the requested change is best for the child –plus you must overcome Ohio's preference for stability.

B. Modifying a Shared Parenting Plan

Ohio distinguishes between changing custody/residential parent and changing terms of a shared parenting plan:

- Both parents can jointly file changes at any time, and the court will adopt them unless not in the child's best interest.
- The court may also modify shared parenting plan terms on request of one or both parents, but it must be in the child's best interest.
- The court can terminate shared parenting if shared parenting is not in the child's best interest.

C. Modifying Parenting Time

Parenting time schedules are decided using Ohio's best-interest factors listed in (things like distance between homes, schedules, the child's adjustment, health/safety, willingness to facilitate time, etc.). Ohio also requires a Notice of Intent to Relocate if the residential parent intends to move from the address in the parenting time order, and the court may hold a hearing to decide whether to revise the schedule.

D. Modifying Child Support

If either parent requests a change, the court must recalculate support under the Ohio worksheet. If the recalculated amount is more than 10% higher or 10% lower than the current order, Ohio law treats that difference as a change of circumstance substantial enough to require modification.

Ohio also treats inadequate health insurance coverage that fails to meet the child's medical needs as a sufficient change of circumstance for modification.

What Does "Change of Circumstances" Mean (in Real Life)?

For Custody Changes

Think "significant and meaningful change since the last order," such as:

- Major change in a parent's ability to care for the child (work schedule, substance issues, safety issues)
- Major change in the child's needs (medical, school, counseling)
- Relocation that affects stability and parenting time
- Ongoing issues that weren't happening (or weren't known) when the last order was made

For Child Support

Often, the "change" is shown by the numbers (income/insurance/childcare/parenting time). If the recalculation differs by more than 10%, that alone generally meets the legal threshold.

Timeline and Hearing Expectations

(Exact deadlines and steps vary by county, and whether you're in Domestic Relations vs. Juvenile Court.)

1. File the motion and required affidavits in the same court that issued the current order.
2. Service: The other parent must be formally served (unless they waive/accept service).
3. Response / scheduling: The case is set for a conference, mediation, and/or hearing depending on local practice.
4. Evidence exchange / preparation: You gather documents and line up witnesses (if needed).
5. Hearing (often before a magistrate):
 - You testify, present exhibits, and may be cross-examined.

- The judge/magistrate focuses on facts and the legal standard (custody = change + best interest; parenting time = best-interest factors; support = recalculation/10% rule).
6. Decision and new order: The court issues a new order/judgment entry.

Practical Tip for Clients: The strongest cases are organized—clear timeline, a small set of high-quality exhibits, and a proposed schedule/order that is specific and workable.

Checklist: Evidence

You do not need every item below—bring what you have.

Client Prep Checklist

Bring:

- ☐ A short-written timeline of what changed since the last order
- ☐ A proposed parenting schedule (if parenting time/custody is at issue)
- ☐ Parenting time calendar (actual overnights/exchanges)
- ☐ Financial documents (if support is at issue)
- ☐ The “top 10–20” most relevant communications (not hundreds)

Custody / Residential Parent Change

You want evidence that proves:

- ☐ What changed since the last order, and
- ☐ Why the requested change is in the child’s best interest, and
- ☐ The child’s stability will remain or improve

Helpful Evidence:

- ☐ Current custody/parenting judgment entry and any prior modifications
- ☐ A dated timeline of key events since the last order
- ☐ School records (attendance, grades, discipline)
- ☐ Medical/therapy records (as applicable)
- ☐ Police reports / protection orders (if applicable)
- ☐ Proof of substance or safety concerns (DUIs, treatment records, test results, witness statements)
- ☐ Parenting time calendars showing what actually happened (missed time, late exchanges)
- ☐ Written communications (texts/emails) showing issues or agreements (keep it organized and limited to the most relevant items)

Parenting Time Modification

- ☐ Evidence should connect to the best-interest factors in R.C. 3109.051(D) (distance, schedules, health/safety, willingness to facilitate time, etc.).

Helpful Evidence:

- ☐ Work schedules, school/daycare schedules, transportation logistics
- ☐ Map/drive-time evidence if distance is an issue
- ☐ Documentation of denial of parenting time (police standby logs, messages, detailed calendar)
- ☐ Proof of safety issues (if any)

Child Support Modification

- ☐ Pay stubs (recent), tax returns/W-2/1099s
- ☐ Proof of childcare expenses
- ☐ Proof of health insurance costs for the child (premium breakdown)
- ☐ Parenting time/overnight calendar (if overnights changed)
- ☐ Proof of other income (bonuses, self-employment records)

Forms Required (Ohio Supreme Court Standardized Forms)

Ohio has statewide standardized forms (your county may require extra local forms).

Parenting Time (Schedule) Change

- ☐ Form 26 / Juvenile Form 5 – Motion for Change of Parenting Time (Companionship and Visitation)
- ☐ Affidavit 3 – Parenting Proceeding Affidavit (required with motions involving custody/parenting time)
- ☐ Form 31 / Juvenile Form 10 – Request for Service

Custody / Parental Rights Change

- ☐ Form 27 / Juvenile Form 6 – Motion for Change of Parental Rights and Responsibilities (Custody)
- ☐ Affidavit 3 – Parenting Proceeding Affidavit
- ☐ Form 31 – Request for Service

Child Support Change

- ☐ Form 28 / Juvenile Form 7 – Motion for Change of Child Support, Medical Support, Tax Exemption, or Other Child-related Expenses
- ☐ Affidavit 1 – Affidavit of Basic Information, Income, and Expenses
- ☐ Form 31 – Request for Service (commonly required)
- ☐ Health Insurance Affidavit (Affidavit 4) (often required/very helpful in support cases)

Local Rule Warning: Many Ohio counties also require “supplemental information” sheets, CSEA documents, or other local forms in addition to the Supreme Court forms.

Mediation: Alternative Dispute Resolution

Mediation is a private meeting where you and the other side try to resolve a legal dispute with the help of a neutral person called a mediator. The mediator does not take sides. Their job is to help everyone communicate, explore options, and try to reach an agreement.

Mediation can happen before a lawsuit is filed, during a case, or even right before trial.



Benefits of Mediation

Mediation has many advantages compared to going to court:

- It can save time. Mediation often resolves disputes faster than waiting for a court date.
- It can save money. Settling early may reduce legal fees and other costs.
- It is private. Mediation is usually confidential, unlike most court hearings.
- You keep more control. A judge makes decisions in court. In mediation, you help decide the outcome.
- It can reduce stress. Mediation is often less formal and less confrontational than court.
- It can protect relationships. This can matter in family, business,

employment, and neighbor disputes.

What Mediation Can Accomplish

Mediation can help people:

- Settle a case completely (all issues resolved).
- Settle part of a case (some issues resolved, others remain).
- Clarify the real problems so the dispute is easier to manage.
- Find creative solutions a court may not be able to order.
- Create a plan for the future, such as how to handle payments, timelines, boundaries, or communication.

If an agreement is reached, it is usually written down and signed. In many cases, it becomes a binding settlement.

Preparing for Mediation Checklist Before mediation

- ☐ Understand your goals. What do you want? What matters most to you?
- ☐ Know your “must-haves” and “nice-to-haves.”
- ☐ Review key documents (contracts, emails, invoices, photos, medical records, etc.).
- ☐ List the main facts in date order (a simple timeline helps).
- ☐ Be ready to explain your position in a clear, short way.
- ☐ Think about settlement options. What outcomes could work for you?
- ☐ Consider your best alternative. If you don’t settle, what happens next (trial, motion, more costs)?
- ☐ Plan for logistics. Time off work, childcare, transportation, and a quiet place if it’s virtual.
- ☐ Bring what you need. Notes, documents, and questions.

Day of Mediation

- ☐ Get rest and eat beforehand.
- ☐ Arrive on time and plan for a full day (some mediations take hours).
- ☐ Stay patient. Breaks and waiting are normal.

How to Communicate Effectively in Mediation

Mediation works best when communication stays focused and respectful—even when emotions are high.

Here are tips that help:

- Stay calm and respectful. Your tone matters.
- Listen fully before responding. Try to understand what the other side is saying.
- Use “I” statements. For example: “I felt blindsided by the change,” instead of “You lied.”
- Be clear and specific. Avoid exaggerations like “always” or “never.”

- Focus on solutions, not blame. Mediation is about what happens next.
- Ask questions. If something is unclear, ask the mediator to help explain it.
- Let the mediator do their job. The mediator can carry messages, reframe words, and help reduce conflict.
- Take breaks if needed. It’s okay to pause and regroup.

It’s also normal for each side to meet privately with the mediator in separate rooms (called a caucus). This can allow more open discussion.

What Happens If Mediation Fails

Sometimes, mediation does not lead to a full agreement. If that happens, you still have options:

- The case continues. You may keep negotiating, file motions, or prepare for trial.
- You may settle later. Many cases settle after mediation once both sides reflect.
- You may narrow the issues. Even if you don’t settle, mediation can help identify what matters most and what evidence is needed.
- Confidentiality usually still applies. In most cases, what is said in mediation cannot be used in court (there are some exceptions, and rules vary by state and case type). A “failed” mediation is not always a waste. It can still provide useful information about risks, costs, and possible next steps.

Final Thought

Mediation is a chance to solve a dispute in a more private, flexible, and practical way. It is not about “winning.” It is about finding a result you can live with—often faster and with less stress than court.

EQUES Client Rights & Responsibilities

This packet is designed to set clear expectations at the outset of the attorney-client relationship. Our goal is to foster a relationship grounded in honesty, empowerment, innovation, and mutual respect, so that we can work together efficiently and effectively.

What Clients Can Expect from EQUES

- Competent, diligent, and ethical legal representation.
- Honest assessments of your matter, including risks, uncertainties, and options.
- Respectful treatment and professional communication.
- Innovative use of technology, including a secure client portal, to keep you informed and empowered.
- Transparency regarding strategy, next steps, and decision points.
- What EQUES Expects from Clients
- Honest and complete disclosure of all relevant facts, even if they may seem unfavorable.
- Timely submission of requested documents and information.
- Respectful communication with attorneys, paralegals, and staff.
- Engagement with your case, including reviewing materials provided to you.

Communication Standards

Written communication is the preferred and most effective form of communication. Clients should follow this order when seeking information:

1. Client Portal – This is the primary and authoritative source for case information, documents, and updates.

2. Email – Used for direct written communication when appropriate.
3. Paralegal – For assistance when information cannot be found in the portal or email.

Because legal matters vary widely in complexity and urgency, EQUES does not set guaranteed response times. Response timing depends on the nature of the issue, court deadlines, and other circumstances.

Document Submission Guidelines

All documents, unless specifically directed otherwise, should be submitted through the client portal. The portal ensures documents are securely stored, properly associated with your matter, and accessible to your legal team. Email should be used only when portal submission is not possible.

Honesty & Communication Policy

Effective legal representation depends on honesty and clear communication. Clients are expected to provide truthful, complete, and timely information. Withholding information or providing inaccurate information can negatively affect outcomes. EQUES commits to providing candid advice and clear explanations so clients are empowered to make informed decisions.

How to Prepare for Meetings

Clients should attend meetings having reviewed all materials provided in advance. This includes

everything you and your attorney have discussed as being relevant and admissible evidence, as well as the basic facts and timeline of your case. Many clients expect their attorney to know their case inside and out, but the truth is, you know your life best – if anyone should have the answers, it should be you. If you do not have any documents or materials requiring review, please communicate that ahead of time. Prepared meetings allow for more productive discussions and better use of time.

How to Track Case Progress

Occasional updates will happen, but the client portal is the primary tool for tracking case progress. Key filings, updates, and documents will be available there. Clients are encouraged to review the portal regularly to stay informed about their matter. Effective communication can fill in any gaps you may find.

Preparing for Court: A Simple Guide to Help You Feel Ready

Going to court can feel stressful. That's normal. The good news is that you don't have to "perform" or know everything. Most court hearings follow a routine. If you prepare ahead of time, you can feel calmer and help the day go smoothly.

What to Wear

Your goal is to look respectful and put-together. Court is a formal setting.

Good choices:

- Clean, neat clothing (like what you'd wear to a job interview)
- Pants or a knee-length skirt
- A button-down shirt, blouse, or plain sweater
- Closed-toe shoes if possible

Try to avoid:

- Shorts, ripped jeans, crop tops, or very tight clothing
- Tank tops or low-cut shirts
- Flip-flops
- Clothing with slogans, pictures, or offensive language
- Hats or sunglasses inside the courtroom (unless for medical/religious reasons)

Tip: Dress in layers. Some courtrooms are cold.

What to Bring

Bring what you need to stay organized and comfortable.

Bring these items:

- A government-issued photo ID (driver's license or passport)
- Any paperwork your attorney asked you to bring
- A notepad and pen

- A list of key dates, names, or questions you want to remember
- Any required documents (example: pay stubs, lease, bills, photos, screenshots—only if your attorney asked)

Optional but helpful:

- Water (if allowed)
- Small snack (for outside the courtroom)
- Phone charger (your phone must be turned off in court)

Do not bring:

- Weapons of any kind (even pocketknives)
- Anything that could be taken by security
- Too many bags (security checks take longer)

Do's and Don'ts in Court

Do:

- Arrive early (at least 30 minutes early, or more if your attorney recommends)
- Turn your phone off or put it on silent
- Stand when the judge enters or when you are told to stand
- Speak clearly and politely
- Follow your attorney's instructions
- Ask your attorney if you don't understand something

Don't:

- Don't interrupt the judge, opposing attorney, or witnesses
- Don't argue, roll your eyes, or make faces
- Don't chew gum, eat, or drink in the courtroom (unless allowed)
- Don't talk while the judge is speaking
- Don't post about your case on social media

Key point: Court is recorded. Even whispers or reactions can be noticed.

How to Testify Effectively

Testifying means answering questions under oath. That can feel intimidating, but you can do it.

Tips that help a lot:

- Tell the truth. Always.
- Listen carefully to the full question. Pause before answering.
- Answer only what was asked. Short and clear is best.
- If you don't know, say "I don't know." Don't guess.
- If you don't remember, say "I don't remember."
- If you didn't understand the question, say so. You can ask: "Can you repeat that?" or "Can you rephrase that?"
- Stay calm if someone sounds aggressive. Keep your voice steady and polite.

Understanding Courtroom Roles

Knowing who is who can reduce stress.

- Judge: Runs the courtroom, makes decisions, and ensures rules are followed.
- Court Clerk: Handles paperwork, calls cases, and manages the court file.
- Court Reporter: Types what is said in court to create a record.

- Bailiff or Court Officer: Provides security and keeps order.
- Attorneys:
 - Your attorney speaks for you and protects your rights.
 - The other side's attorney represents the other party.
- Witnesses: People who answer questions about what they saw, heard, or know.
- Interpreter (if needed): Helps people understand and speak in court.

Transportation and Parking Guidance

Getting there on time is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety.

Plan ahead:

- Look up the courthouse address the day before
- Check travel time in the morning (traffic can change)
- Plan to arrive early for parking and security screening
- Save the courthouse address on your phone

Parking tips:

- Many courthouses have limited parking
- Public garages may fill quickly
- Bring payment options (some lots are cashless)

Security note: You may have to pass through a metal detector and bag check. This can take time.

Day-of Checklist

Use this list the night before and the morning of court.

Night Before

- ☐ Confirm the courthouse address and courtroom (if you have it)
- ☐ Confirm your hearing time
- ☐ Set your clothes out
- ☐ Put documents in a folder
- ☐ Charge your phone

- ☐ Set two alarms

Morning Of

- ☐ Eat something light (if you can)
- ☐ Leave early
- ☐ Bring your ID
- ☐ Bring your paperwork folder
- ☐ Bring a notepad and pen
- ☐ Silence your phone before entering the courtroom
- ☐ Meet your attorney where they told you to meet (if applicable)

Final Thoughts

Court can feel overwhelming, but preparation helps. If you're unsure about anything—what to bring, where to go, or what will happen—ask your attorney ahead of time. Showing up early, dressing neatly, and staying calm and respectful goes a long way.

EQUES Family Law Intake Packet

Purpose: Provide everything needed for a smooth onboarding experience.



Confidential Client Intake Questionnaire

One of the most important components of the intake packet is the confidential client intake questionnaire. This document allows clients to provide detailed background information about themselves, their spouse or co-parent, and their children. The questionnaire typically covers personal identifying information, marital history, dates of separation or marriage, prior court orders, and any pending legal actions. It may also ask about issues such as domestic violence concerns, substance abuse, or special needs of children—topics that are essential to effective legal strategy but may be difficult to discuss verbally during an initial consultation. Completing the questionnaire carefully and honestly enables our attorneys to identify potential legal

issues early, flag urgent concerns, and tailor advice to the client's specific circumstances.

[*Reference Back of the Book](#)

Financial Disclosure Form

Financial transparency is a cornerstone of family law. Courts require full and accurate disclosure of income, assets, and debts, and failures in disclosure can seriously undermine a case.

The financial disclosure form included in the intake packet helps clients organize and present their financial information in a structured format. This form typically asks for details regarding income, expenses, bank accounts, investments, retirement accounts, real property, and outstanding obligations. By gathering this information early, we can assess potential support obligations, evaluate property division issues, and ensure

compliance with court disclosure requirements. It also allows us to identify areas where additional documentation may be needed.

**Reference Back of the Book*

Employment & Income Documentation List

To support the financial disclosure form, the intake packet includes a checklist of required employment and income documentation. This list explains which documents clients should gather and why they are necessary.

Commonly requested documents include recent pay stubs, tax returns, W-2s or 1099s, employment contracts, bonus or commission statements, and proof of other income such as rental income or government benefits. For self-employed clients, additional documentation such as profit-and-loss statements or business tax returns may be required.

Providing this list upfront helps clients prepare efficiently and reduces the risk of delays caused by missing or incomplete financial information.

**Reference Back of the Book*

Asset & Liability Checklist

In addition to income, family law cases often hinge on the identification and valuation of assets and liabilities. The asset and liability checklist guides clients through the process of identifying everything they own and owe, whether individually or jointly.

This checklist typically includes real estate, vehicles, bank and investment accounts, retirement plans, business interests, personal property, credit cards, loans, and other debts. Clients are encouraged to be thorough, even if they are unsure whether an item is legally significant.

A complete asset and liability picture allows our attorneys to analyze property division issues accurately and to advise clients on potential risks and opportunities.

**Reference to back of Book*

Communication Policy

Clear, careful communication is essential in divorce and custody cases. What you say—and to whom—can have lasting legal consequences. The following guidelines are designed to protect you and your case.

1. Attorney–Client Communications and Confidentiality

All communications between you and your attorney are strictly confidential and protected by the attorney-client privilege.

- What you tell your attorney cannot be used against you in court.
- The opposing party, their attorney, the court, and anyone else will never have access to these communications.
- There is no scenario in which the other side will “find out” what you said to your attorney—period.

For this reason, you should be completely honest and forthcoming with your attorney, even if the information feels uncomfortable or damaging. Your attorney can only protect you and advocate effectively if they know the full picture.

2. Communications with the Opposing Party

Any communication with the opposing party (your spouse, co-parent, or former partner) should be approached with extreme care.

- Strive for peaceful, cooperative, and respectful communication at all times, even if the other party is hostile, unfair, or provocative.
- Assume that everything you say or write—texts, emails, social media messages, voicemails, or in-person statements—will be shown to a judge and used against you.
- Emotional reactions, sarcasm, threats, or venting can seriously harm your credibility and your case.

When in doubt, say less—or consult your attorney before responding.

3. Communications with Third Parties

Communications with friends, family members, coworkers, or anyone else outside your legal team are not confidential, no matter how much you trust them.

- These individuals can be legally compelled to testify or provide messages, emails, or screenshots.
- Even well-meaning people may unintentionally say something that harms your case.
- You should treat conversations with third parties as if you are speaking directly to the opposing attorney.

As a general rule: if it's something you would not want repeated in court, do not say it to anyone other than your attorney.

Bottom Line

Your safest place to communicate openly is with your attorney. Everywhere else, caution and restraint are essential to protecting your rights, your credibility, and your outcome.

Billing Practices & Retainer Agreements

Transparency regarding fees is critical in family law representation. Along with payment, the final step in retaining our representation is to sign your fee agreement. Some might also call this an engagement letter. The fee agreement includes a summary of our billing practices and retainer agreement, as well as hourly rates for attorneys and staff, to ensure clients understand the financial aspects of representation before formally engaging the firm.

Providing this information upfront helps clients make informed decisions and avoids misunderstandings later.

Identity Verification & Conflict Check Forms

Prior to representation, the intake team will take your identity and perform a conflict check, which is a check of our internal records for the identity of the person or entity you want to sue. This check ensures that we can represent you in an ethical and appropriate manner.

Client Questionnaire

Client

Your Full Legal Name: _____

Address: _____

Former Name: _____

Do you wish to be restored to this name? Yes/No

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security Number: _____

County of Residence: _____ How Long? _____

Do you plan to move out of the state or county? Yes/No

Did you provide financial support to spouse's education? Yes/No

Occupation: _____

Employer _____

Present year income: _____

Last year income: _____

Two years ago income: _____

Date of Marriage: _____ City, State of Marriage: _____

Date of Separation: _____ Requesting Spousal Support? Yes/No

Did you have a Pre-nuptial Agreement? Yes/No

Spouse

Spouse Full Legal Name: _____

Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security Number: _____

County of Residence: _____ How Long? _____

Did spouse provide financial support to your education? Yes/No

Occupation: _____

Employer _____

Present year income: _____

Last year income: _____

Two years ago income: _____

Property

Real Estate

Address: _____

Mortgage? Yes/No

Bank: _____ Amount owed: _____

How would you like real estate to be distributed? *(Do you or spouse keep the residence, should it be sold, should there be refinancing?)*

Vehicles

Make/Model/Year _____

Name on Title: _____

Primary Driver: _____

Name on Loan: _____

Bank _____ Amount owed: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Make/Model/Year _____

Name on Title: _____

Primary Driver: _____

Name on Loan: _____

Bank _____ Amount owed: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Make/Model/Year _____

Name on Title: _____

Primary Driver: _____

Name on Loan: _____

Bank _____ Amount owed: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Household Goods and Furniture Valued Over \$250

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

How to be distributed: _____

Bank Accounts

Cash, Checking and Savings Accounts

Type: _____

Bank: _____ Account # _____

Balance: _____

Whose name(s) _____

Circle one: joint or individual

How to be distributed: _____

Cash, Checking and Savings Accounts

Type: _____

Bank: _____ Account # _____

Balance: _____

Whose name(s) _____

Circle one: joint or individual

How to be distributed: _____

Cash, Checking and Savings Accounts

Type: _____

Bank: _____ Account # _____

Balance: _____

Whose name(s) _____

Circle one: joint or individual

How to be distributed: _____

Life Insurance

Insurance Company and Policy Number: _____

Beneficiary: _____ Amount: _____

Insurance Company and Policy Number: _____

Beneficiary: _____ Amount: _____

Pension or Retirement:

Circle one: OPERS, STRS, 401K, Other

Account #: _____ Value: _____

Employer: _____

Length of Payment into Account: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Business Interests *(if more than one, list others on separate page)*

Business Name: _____

Type (LLC, corporation, sole proprietorship, partnership, etc.): _____

Owners/members, and share of ownership for each:

Date formed: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Other Property

List and indicate how you would like each to be distributed:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Debt Information Credit Cards:

Whose name(s): _____

Type: _____ Bank: _____

Acct. Balance: \$ _____ Monthly payment: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Whose name(s): _____

Type: _____ Bank: _____

Acct. Balance: \$ _____ Monthly payment: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Whose name(s): _____

Type: _____ Bank: _____

Acct. Balance: \$ _____ Monthly payment: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Student Loan(s)

Whose name(s): _____

Type: _____ Bank: _____

Acct. Balance: \$ _____ Monthly payment: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Whose name(s): _____

Type: _____ Bank: _____

Acct. Balance: \$ _____ Monthly payment: _____

How to be distributed: _____

Other Debts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Number of MINOR Children

Child 1 full name:_____

Parents (if not husband and wife): _____

Date of Birth:_____ Social Security Number:_____

Child 2 full name:_____

Parents (if not husband and wife): _____

Date of Birth:_____ Social Security Number:_____

Child 3 full name:_____

Parents (if not husband and wife): _____

Date of Birth:_____ Social Security Number:_____

Child 4 full name:_____

Parents (if not husband and wife): _____

Date of Birth:_____ Social Security Number:_____

Children's Expenses

Extracurricular activities_____

Are you/spouse paying for those expenses? Yes/No

How would you like to divide those expenses? _____

Are you/spouse paying for college/higher education expenses? Yes/No

How would you like to divide those expenses? _____

Health Insurance

	Yes	No
Is/are your child(ren) currently enrolled in a government-provided program (i.e. <i>Healthy Start/Medicaid</i>)?		
Is/are your child(ren) enrolled in an individual (non-group or COBRA) health insurance plan?		
Is/are your child(ren) enrolled in a plan found through the exchange/Affordable HealthCare Marketplace?		
Is/are your child(ren) enrolled in a health insurance plan through a group (employer or other organization)?		
If your child(ren) is/are not enrolled, does/do he/she/they have health insurance available through a group (employer or other organization)?		
Does the available insurance cover primary care services within 30 miles of the children's home?		
Does the available insurance cover primary care services within 30 miles of the children's home?		
Name of group (employer or organization) that provides health insurance:		
Address		
Phone		