

Ohio Child Custody Reference Sheet

- **Best interest of the child:** All custody decisions focus on the child's wellbeing.
- **Custody laws are complicated:** The specifics depend on whether you're married or [unmarried](#), and whether you want sole custody or shared parenting.
- **Legal custody:** In joint custody, both parents are residential parents and legal custodians. They [share decision-making responsibilities](#). In sole custody, only one parent gets to make decisions.
- **Physical custody:** [Parenting time](#) (physical custody) is the time you spend with your child. It's separate from legal custody. Parents can share decision-making, but have unequal parenting time.
- **Shared parenting is the standard:** Ohio law favors shared parenting (joint legal custody), where both parents have equal rights and responsibilities.
- **Establishing paternity:** For married parents, paternity is automatic. [Unmarried fathers need to establish paternity](#) before they can file for parental rights.
- **Custody evaluations:** When the co-parents disagree, a custody evaluator figures out whether they can care for their child and co-parent effectively. Then [the evaluator provides recommendations to the court](#).
- **Factors influencing custody decisions:** The judge looks at [15 issues to decide who gets custody](#). Factors include everyone's wishes, everyone's physical and mental health, the child's relationships, the child's adjustment to their school and community, and more.
- **The child's preference:** The court considers the child's wishes. But there is no specific age when a child can choose their custodial parent.
- **Emergency custody:** The court only grants emergency custody in serious situations, where the child's safety is at immediate risk.
- **Visitation rights:** In Ohio, [visitation is called companionship](#). It's usually granted to a grandparent or other significant adult. (If it's a parent, it's just called parenting time.)
- **Using a co-parenting app:** [OurFamilyWizard](#) helps with better communication and automatic documentation. It is strongly recommended by many attorneys and often required by courts.

Consider your child's unique circumstances—and consult an attorney.

This does not constitute legal advice. Speak to a local legal professional for information specific to your case.