



## Summit County Domestic Relations Court

Administrative Judge Katarina Cook

**LAST UPDATED:** Wednesday, February 22, 2023

**Hon. Katarina Cook**  
Administrative Judge

**Hon. Kani H. Hightower**  
Judge

**Chief Magistrate**  
Elisa Hill

### Magistrates

Jason Adams  
Stephan Collins  
Erin Dazey  
Diane Dougherty  
Brittany Durieux  
Cara Ford  
Rebecca DiDonato  
Heimbaugh  
Elisa Hill  
David Lombardi  
Kimberly Smith Rivera  
P. Lynn Seifert  
Christopher Snyder

**Mediator**  
**/Community Outreach**  
**Director**

Paul M. Henry

### Court Administrator

Thomas McLaughlin

### Family Court Services Evaluators

Randy Flick, Director

Cortney Crew  
Jean Dietz  
Alissa Endicott  
Lisa Radaker  
Joan Shaffer

### CONTACT

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## Press Kit

### Mission Statement of the Summit County Domestic Relations Court

The mission of the Summit County Domestic Relations Court is to provide fair, effective and compassionate legal resolution to conflicts involving families and children within the parameters defined by Ohio law.

### Vision Statement

The Court will provide equal access to a fair and effective system of justice for all without excess cost, inconvenience, or delay, with sensitivity to an increasingly diverse society.

The Court will offer appropriate methods of dispute resolution and mediation services while preserving the constitutional right to trial by an impartial tribunal.

The Court will ensure a safe environment for the public and will strive to implement innovative programs for the benefit of the community.

### The Court hears and rules on Domestic Relations cases, which includes:

- Divorce
- Dissolution
- Annulments
- Legal Separations
- Parentage Cases involving Unmarried Parents
- Legal Custody Cases involving minor children who are not wards of another court
- Parental rights & Parenting Time
- Child Support
- Civil Protection Orders
- Dating Violence Protection Orders



## Court Resources & General Information

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### **Administrative Judge Katarina Cook Bio:**

Judge Katarina Cook is a proud resident of Akron and a product of the Akron Public Schools. She graduated from Firestone High School in 1982 and went on to earn dual Bachelor of Arts Degrees in both Psychology and History.

Judge Cook earned her Juris Doctorate from The University of Akron School of Law in 1990 and was admitted to the Ohio Bar that same year. In 1993, Judge Cook joined the Stark County Prosecutor's Office, where she specialized in the prosecution of child sex offenders and served on the Child Sex Abuse Task Force.

In 1997, Judge Cook began her own law firm. During that time she continued her advocacy for abused and neglected children and was recognized by Ohio's 123rd Congress for her outstanding work as a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) at the Summit County Juvenile Court. She was also appointed and served as a GAL in Summit County Domestic Relations Court. Judge Cook also received training in Domestic Relations Mediation and General Mediation and worked as a substitute mediator for the Summit County Court of Common Pleas. In addition, she joined a Domestic Relations Mediation group in Stark County and mediated cases in the Stark County Family Court.

In 2005, Judge Cook was appointed as the Traffic Magistrate for the Akron Municipal Court, where she presided over hundreds of trials and resolved thousands of cases. In 2009, Judge Cook was elected Judge of the Akron Municipal Court. In addition to her regular duties, Judge Cook presided over the Drug Court and, since June of 2012, presided over OVI Court, which received certification by the Ohio Supreme Court in June 2015.

Judge Cook was then re-elected in 2013. In 2016, together with Judge Jill Flagg-Lanzinger of the Barberton Municipal Court, Judge Lisa Coates from the Stow Municipal Court, and the Humane Society of Greater Akron, Judge Cook began offering animal cruelty prevention classes as a sentencing option for defendants convicted of crimes involving animals under state and local laws. The class is called "Care of Animals and Abuse Prevention" (CAAP) and is designed to address the rise in the number of animal neglect and abuse cases by teaching defendants how to treat their pets appropriately.

In 2016, Judge Cook successfully ran for the open seat on the Summit County Domestic Relations Court being vacated due to Judge Dezso's retirement. She was sworn in on January 5, 2017.



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Administrative Judge

Outside of the courtroom Judge Cook has been active in the Ohio Women's Bar Association (OWBA), serving as an At-Large Trustee. Locally, she has been very involved with the Akron Bar Association's Street Law Program, where she has served as either chair or vice-chair from 2006 to 2014.

**Hon. Kani H. Hightower**  
Judge

Judge Cook has also served as chair of the Municipal Courts Committee, and was co-chair of the Mock Trial Committee. Judge Cook is also a Bencher in the Scanlon/Bell Inns of Court, and has presented on various topics before attorneys, judges, and law students. Most recently, Judge Cook has joined the Summit County Collaborative Against Human Trafficking, volunteering her time speaking at seminars and at community outreach events.

**Chief Magistrate**  
Elisa Hill

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Since 2006 Judge Cook has been known as "Coach" to a middle school mock trial team at her children's school, where she thoroughly enjoys encouraging young students to participate in law-related education. In 2016, she began coaching St. Vincent St. Mary's High School Mock Trial Team. She has been a room mom for each of her sons.

Judge Cook is a community volunteer, serving on numerous boards, including the Friends of Hower House and Cascade Park Locks Association. She has also served on the boards for the Preservation Alliance of Akron, Akron Child Guidance Center Women's Board, the first Summit County Juvenile Court CASA Board, and the Junior League of Akron.

**Mediator  
/Community Outreach  
Director**

Paul M. Henry

An avid gardener, Judge Cook is a Summit County Master Gardener and is a member of the Akron Garden Club. Judge Katarina Cook is a devoted wife and mother to four sons.

**Court Administrator**

Thomas McLaughlin

**Summit County Domestic Relations Court Main Website:**

<https://drcourt.org/wp/>

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Evaluators**

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**For Photos, Video, or other media please contact the Community Outreach Director.**