Welcome to Skills on the Hill!

We are grateful that you have chosen to work with our practice for your family's pediatric therapy needs. Please use this handbook as a guide for frequently asked questions and a reminder of policies that you agreed to upon starting services with us. We are so excited to work with your family and look forward to the growth that your child will make while working with our team.

Sincerely,

Skills on the Hill

Getting Started: What to Expect

We want every family's experience with Skills on the Hill to feel clear and supported from the very first call. Here is what you can expect as you begin with us, and who will be your point of contact along the way.

When you first reach out, your initial point of contact is our Intake Coordinator. They will verify your insurance benefits, review those benefits with you, and walk you through what we offer and what an evaluation looks like, so you know what to expect before you begin.

Once your evaluation is scheduled, our office staff become your main point of contact for any questions leading up to and following the evaluation. After the evaluation, your evaluating therapist will share their findings and recommendations with you.

If therapy is recommended, our Scheduling Coordinator will work with you to find a standing weekly appointment time, so your child's sessions can take place consistently. Regular, recurring attendance is one of the most important factors in your child's progress.

Once regular therapy is underway, here is who to reach for what, so you always get accurate, timely answers:

- **Office staff:** scheduling changes, appointment questions, and attendance.
- **Treating therapist(s):** your child's care, progress, and clinical questions — often best discussed during the consultation time at the end of each session.
- **Billing team:** any billing or payment questions.
- **Benefits team:** any insurance or benefits questions while your treatment plan is in effect.

Reaching the right team helps us keep your child's care running smoothly. In some situations, to keep communication clear and consistent, Skills on the Hill may designate a specific point of contact for your family, so you always have one reliable source for information.

Scheduling, Attendance, Late Arrival & Late Pick-Up Policies

As you and your child have made the commitment to therapy, we have made the same commitment to you in reserving your scheduled weekly time slot(s). Excessive absences affect your child's rate of progress and take away valuable therapy time from another child on our waiting list. We expect clients to consistently attend scheduled appointments, and ask that you give us as much advance notice as possible if you need to cancel — including changes due to school field trips, vacation plans, and medical appointments. Generally, we do not require families or caregivers to stay on site during the session, but we reserve the right to ask them to stay in specific cases.

If there is a Federal Holiday (usually on a Monday) or school is canceled due to weather, assume Skills on the Hill is open unless we contact you; we are a medical practice and do not follow the school calendar or district weather-based decisions. Skills on the Hill is closed six days each year: New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and two additional days during Winter Break. If we ever need to close for weather, we make that decision based on the safety of our community and will notify affected families by phone or email and send a notice to the SOTH community. On any day we are closed, we will do our best to reschedule your session to maintain continuity of care.

For patients who are members of the Health Services for Children with Special Needs (HSCSN) plan or Virginia Medicaid HMO plans (Molina, Aetna Better Health Virginia), whether primary or secondary, Skills on the Hill follows the rules for all Medicaid Managed Care Organizations in the District of Columbia and Virginia. Federal and state policies prohibit us from charging Medicaid members for missed or canceled appointments. For this reason, consistent attendance is especially important:

- HSCSN and Virginia Medicaid HMOs will only authorize therapy for services considered medically necessary.
- They require SOTH to routinely provide session notes and progress reports demonstrating progress toward goals, to validate the need for ongoing services.
- If a member is not consistently attending authorized sessions, demonstrating progress, and following through with the prescribed home program, HSCSN and Virginia Medicaid HMOs may choose not to continue authorizing services.

Appointment Scheduling

Therapy sessions are scheduled for frequency and duration according to the plan of care set by the evaluating therapist. Skills on the Hill schedules appointments in two ways:

1. Recurring weekly appointments: Our typical format includes recurring weekly timeslots with the same therapist. We work as best we can to meet families' scheduling needs and maintain consistency of care, though after-school timeslots are extremely popular and availability may be limited. If a therapist is out, you will be given reschedule options to ensure continuity of care.
2. Flex scheduling: For families unable to commit to a weekly slot, the Flex option provides week-to-week scheduling.

CareFirst / BCBS Primary & HSCSN / Medicaid MCO Secondary Scheduling

For patients with CareFirst/BCBS as primary and HSCSN or a Virginia Medicaid MCO as secondary, sessions are scheduled in groups of 6 successive appointments. To schedule the next 6, the family must provide the necessary EOB documentation so we can submit for secondary reimbursement; without it, additional sessions will not be scheduled. If scheduling lapses, the timeslot is held for one missed session; if 2 consecutive sessions are missed due to missing EOB information, the patient loses their recurring slot and can be rescheduled once the documentation is provided. Staying current with EOB information keeps the therapy schedule running smoothly.

Missed Appointments

A cancellation made less than 24 hours in advance or a missed appointment (“no-show”), including evaluations, will be charged a fee (prorated for shorter sessions, and per discipline for co-treatments).

Please note: fees described in this handbook do not apply to families with Medicaid plans that we are in network with.

If a patient misses more than 25% of scheduled appointments within a discipline (OT, PT, or Speech) for two months in a row, the patient will lose their permanent weekly time for that discipline and may move to our flex scheduling program. Exceptions may be made in the event of an emergency or illness.

No charge or penalty applies for a therapist cancellation, and we will make every effort to make up the session.

Late Arrival

Therapy is scheduled for a set duration and cannot be extended if you arrive late. A late fee applies for late arrivals, even with notification; because these fees cannot be billed to insurance, your card on file will be charged at the time of service. If the child arrives with fewer than 8 minutes remaining, the appointment is canceled and a no-show fee applies.

Late Pick-Up

Each session includes two parts: direct treatment and consultation time. Direct treatment stops about 10 minutes before the end of a 60-minute session (5 minutes for a 30-minute session) so your therapist can debrief the session, review home program activities, and answer questions. Please be present for this consultation time and to pick up your child promptly. A fee applies if you are more than 10 minutes late for pick-up, even with notification (this fee does not apply to families with HSCSN insurance).

Sick Policy

1. No child or adult who has presented with any of the following in the last 24 hours will be permitted into the clinic: fever of 100.4°F or above, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, any rash that could be contagious, pink eye, lice, or a severe cough different from baseline. A child should be free of these for 24 hours before returning to therapy.
2. If a family cancels a session the same day because the child is sick, there will be no cancellation fee.
3. If a child shows signs of illness during a session (vomiting, emerging rash, prolonged coughing, the start of a fever), the session will be suspended immediately; the therapist will call the parent/guardian and the child will go home.

Respiratory Illness Policy

Community members with respiratory or flu-like symptoms — such as fever, chills, cough, sore throat, body aches, congestion, or fatigue — should not come to the clinic, or should go home. Please stay home until you have had no symptoms beyond a light cough or congestion for 24 hours without medication, and for at least 24 hours after a fever resolves without fever-reducing medication.

You may attend with a mild, lingering cough or congestion that is not worsening, as long as you mask until it fully resolves. If you test positive for COVID-19, RSV, or flu, please mask for at least 5 days from the positive test (or until symptoms subside, whichever is longer); if you are unable to mask, please stay home during that period. We generally follow current CDC guidance, and ask all community members to practice healthy hygiene habits to help keep our environment free of illness.

Plan of Care Compliance for Physical Therapy

For patients receiving physical therapy, plans of care developed from evaluations and re-evaluations require a physician's signature for certification, and a new signature is required if the frequency or long-term goals change or if there is a hospitalization. Skills on the Hill will send the required documents to your child's pediatrician and follow up by phone up to two additional times; it is often helpful for families to follow up directly as well, which can help therapy start or resume faster. If a certified plan of care is not signed and returned within 30 days of beginning services or of a new plan of care, physical therapy sessions will be paused and reinstated upon receipt of the signed plan.

Physical Aggression & Safety

Skills on the Hill is set up to support children with mild and occasional moderate aggressive behavior. To keep everyone safe, a therapist may end a session early, and we may adjust a child's plan of care if aggressive or physical behaviors become consistent. A session will be ended after any of the following behaviors:

- Restraining a client more than twice for over 2–3 minutes
- More than two instances of scratching
- More than two instances of hitting or kicking with intention to hurt
- A bite

If two consecutive sessions — or two out of four sessions — end early due to aggression, we will pause services and meet with your child's team to determine the best next steps. Options may include inviting the child's behavioral therapist into sessions, adjusting the mode or location of treatment (such as teletherapy), or a referral to another program. Any physical intervention is performed only by staff trained to do so. For everyone's safety, families remain outside the treatment spaces unless accompanied by a staff member.

Instances of Bias

Skills on the Hill does not tolerate instances of bias towards any member of the SOTH community (client, family members, or staff members), including racism, sexism, or statements of bias due to any other factor (LGBTQIA+ status, disability status, religion, etc.). Continued harmful behavior towards SOTH community members will not be tolerated. If a patient or family has displayed multiple instances of bias across multiple people, or repeated instances toward one person, services may be discontinued.

A Respectful & Supportive Environment

Strong partnerships between families and our team are at the heart of great care. We are committed to treating every family with warmth, respect, and professionalism, and we know our families share that same commitment toward our team. Every member of our staff — from our therapists to our administrative and front desk team — plays an essential role in your child's care and deserves that same courtesy.

To keep our environment positive and welcoming for all of our families, children, and staff, we ask that everyone who visits or contacts Skills on the Hill:

- Communicate with all of our team members, clinical and administrative alike, with kindness and respect.

- Partner with us when questions or concerns arise, so we can work through them together.
- Share accurate and complete information with us, and use only your own payment and personal information.
- Follow the scheduling, communication, attendance, and financial policies outlined in this handbook.

Maintaining a respectful, collaborative environment allows our team to do their best work for your child. If respectful communication ever breaks down, we will always try to address it together with you first. Where a positive working relationship cannot be maintained, it may affect our ability to continue providing services, as described under Discontinuation of Services.

Families with Shared or Separated Custody

We welcome and value the involvement of both parents in a child's care. For families in which parents are separated, divorced, or share custody, we want to make sure everyone stays well informed and that our focus remains on your child's progress.

To help us do that, we ask that families provide current custody and legal-authority documentation and keep it up to date. We make decisions about a child's plan of care, frequency, scheduling, and consent together with the parent or guardian who holds the applicable legal authority, and where both parents are entitled to information, we will make every effort to share the same information with both.

So that our energy stays focused on your child, we ask that parents coordinate communication and logistics between themselves — including scheduling and transportation — in accordance with their custody order. Our team is not able to serve as an intermediary between parents or to mediate disagreements regarding custody or scheduling. When parents coordinate smoothly, it helps us provide your child with the most consistent and effective care.

Discontinuation of Services

Our goal is always to support your child's growth through a strong, lasting therapeutic relationship, and in the great majority of cases that is exactly what happens. On occasion, circumstances may make it necessary for Skills on the Hill to discontinue services. These can include:

- a breakdown in the collaborative working relationship needed to provide effective care;
- repeated difficulty meeting attendance, scheduling, communication, or financial policies;
- behavior that is abusive, threatening, or harassing toward staff, patients, or families, or that affects their safety or wellbeing;
- providing inaccurate information or using another person's information without authorization;
- circumstances in which we can no longer effectively meet your child's clinical needs.

In most situations, we will provide written notice along with a reasonable amount of time and referrals to other providers, so your child's care can continue without an unnecessary gap, and we will transfer records to your chosen provider upon receipt of a signed release. In rare cases involving unsafe, threatening, or harassing behavior, we may need to discontinue services more immediately; even then, we will provide referrals and transfer records to support a smooth transition wherever possible.

By beginning or continuing services with Skills on the Hill, families agree to the policies set forth in this handbook.

Reporting an Incident

If you would like to report an incident during your time at SOTH — such as a medical emergency, an instance of aggression, or a statement of bias toward a staff member or client — please speak to the Front Desk Representative, who will connect you with our HR manager. Incidents may occur in any setting (clinic, schools, aquatics, group, or Easy Rider).

Clinic Evacuation

In the event of an emergency that requires evacuation, please follow the direction of our staff to the nearest available exit — treating therapists will assist their clients, and front desk staff will assist anyone in the waiting area. Once outside, please gather at our designated meeting location so everyone can be accounted for:

- Arlington, VA: across the street from the vet office, in front of the church on Wayne.
- Capitol Hill, DC: across the street, in front of the apartment buildings on 13th Street.

Insurance and Payment Information

Please refer to the Financial Agreement you signed prior to starting services for details specific to your insurance coverage and costs. If your insurance changes at any time, it is your responsibility to notify Skills on the Hill of the change or lapse in coverage.

Any delinquent balance over $1,000 will result in the postponement of all services until the account is paid in full or a payment plan is established with our Billing Department. If a check is returned, the family has 10 days from the date of contact to provide a certified cashier's check for the outstanding balance plus the returned-check fee and an administrative fee. Accounts 30 days past due incur an interest charge, and accounts past 65 days are sent to our collection agency.

Families can find current statement balances in the Patient Portal, and may set up email and text alerts for balances due. Skills on the Hill keeps a credit card on file for all patients and charges the balance due 5 to 7 days after the billing statement is emailed. For billing questions, contact us at 202-544-5439 or billing@skillsonthehill.com.