



## COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING ADAPTIVE GYMNASTICS

### PATHWAY: NUTRITION AND EXERCISE

#### Initiative Description

Adaptive Gymnastics is an outreach program that provides physical fitness and fun activities for children with various physical, developmental, and neurological disabilities throughout Hampton Roads. The students work with occupational therapists and the child's family to develop goals for each child and then create lessons and activities to meet each child's developmental goals.

#### Annual Student Activities

- 12 students per cohort across 2 cohorts.
- Students will be assigned 1-2 class participant(s) and work with the participant's guardians and outside therapists to define specific goals for that participant.
- Students will develop specific lesson plans for weekly classes with the participant's goals in mind.
- Students will volunteer at weekly gymnastics classes helping to guide participants through class.

#### Community Outcomes/Results

- ↑ Promotion of inclusion of individuals with disabilities in sports and recreational activities.
- ↑ Improved physical abilities and social skills for participants.
- ↑ Improved self-esteem, resiliency, and determination in our participants.

#### Facilitators

Deborah Damon, PhD

#### Community Partners

- Excalibur Gymnastics
- Eliza Hope Foundation
- Jump Start Social Skills Program
- Special Olympics Virginia
- Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters Developmental Clinic

#### The Need

- The cost of early intervention programs can be a barrier to entry for many families, providing these classes as a service eliminates the cost of an additional therapy session for our participants.
- Fostering friendships amongst young people with disabilities can improve overall well-being, help them learn important norms and values, and contribute to improved outcomes as they enter adulthood.
- Learning how to effectively communicate and develop relationships with individuals with varying levels of intellectual and speech disabilities is a vital skill for healthcare providers. This program provides an optimal opportunity for developing those communication skills.