

# Why Does Spending on Special Needs Vary Across Counties in Vermont?

Joyce Manchester, Joint Fiscal Office  
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# What do we mean by Special Needs?

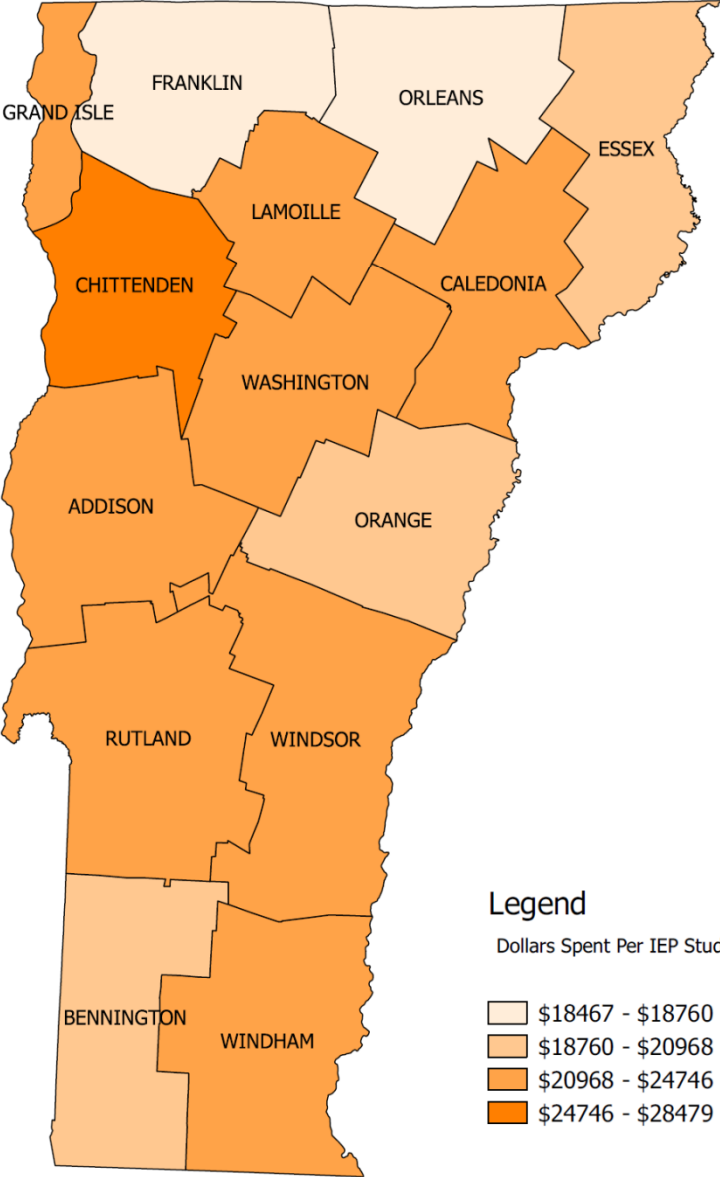
- A student who receives special needs education is enrolled in an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Special needs (IEP) programs can address a variety of issues from emotional disturbance and mental health issues to speech impediments to physical impairments

# Findings, Part 1

- Spending on special education per special needs student varies substantially across counties.
- Using FY2015 data,
  - On average, \$23,345 per IEP student
  - Chittenden County: \$28,479
  - Franklin County: \$18,467

# Special Needs Spending Per Student with an Individualized Education Program, FY2015

Prepared by the State of Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

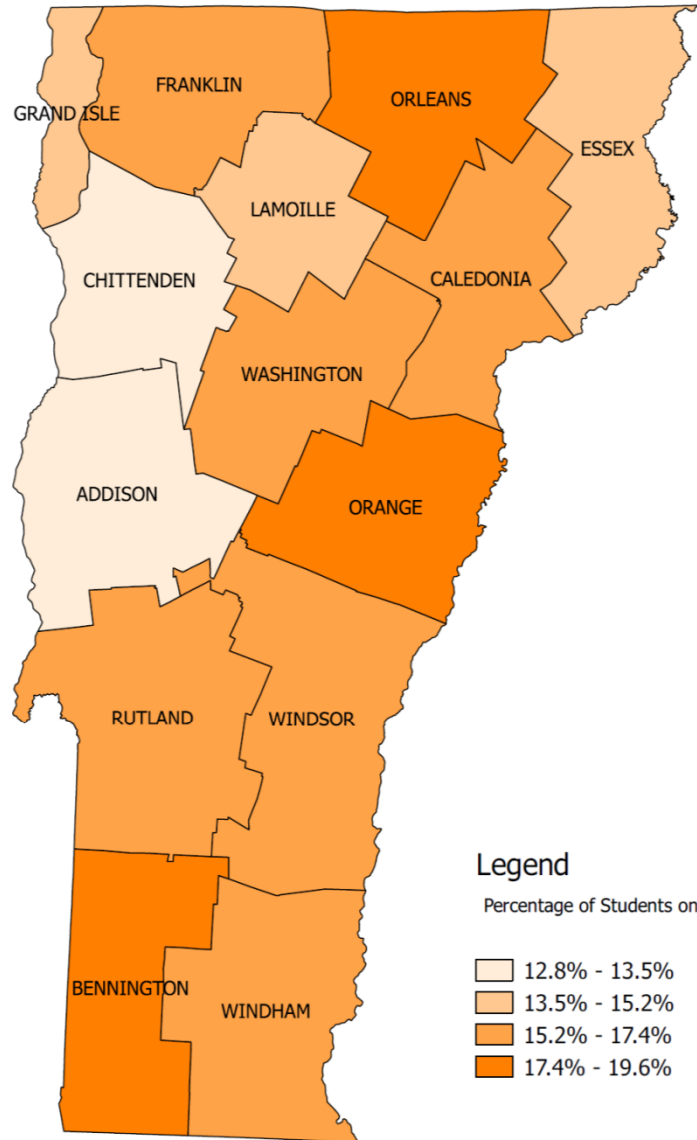


# Findings, Part 2

- The percentage of students enrolled in special needs programs is high and varies substantially across counties.
- Using FY2015 data:
  - On average in Vermont: 15.5 percent
    - National average is 12 percent
  - Chittenden County: 12.8 percent
  - Orleans County: 19.6 percent

# Percentage of Students on an Individualized Education Program

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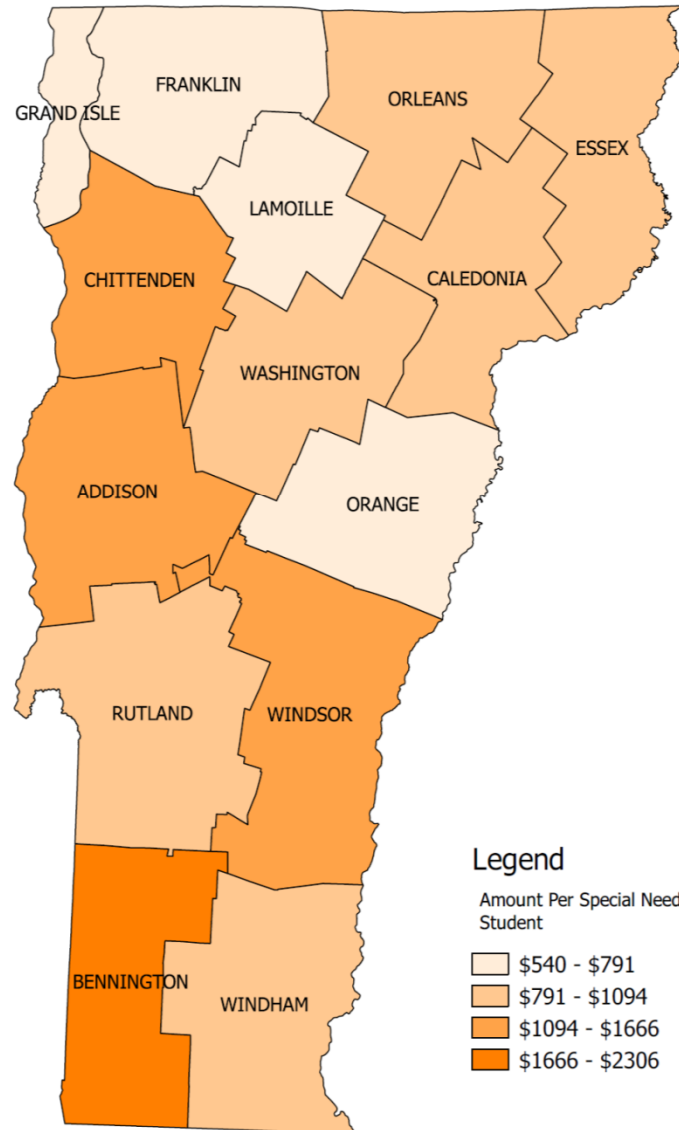


# Findings, Part 3

- As a share of special needs spending, extraordinary spending that exceeds \$50,000 per special needs student also varies substantially across counties.
- Using FY2015 data:
  - On average: 5.1 percent of IEP spending
  - Grand Isle County: 2.6 percent
  - Bennington County: 11.0 percent
- JFO does not know the number of students with extraordinary spending in each S.U. or county

# Amount of Special Education Spending Eligible For Extraordinary Reimbursement, per Special Needs Student, FY2015

Prepared by the State of Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office





# Data

- FY2015 data on K-12 special needs spending and number of students by Supervisory Union
  - From the Agency of Education
- Aggregate S.U. data up to the county level
  - 15 S.U.s straddle county lines, so allocate students and spending to the county of residence where possible
  - Rough allocation of spending and students by county

# Sources of data to help explain the variation across counties

- American Community Survey
  - Median household income, 2010-2014 average
- Pew Charitable Trusts
  - Change in inflation-adjusted median household income between 2000 and 2013
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
  - Measures of factors that affect health, by county

# Economic, Health, and Social Measures by County - RWJ

Health Behaviors	Social and Economic Factors	Physical environment
Alcohol and drug use	Education	Air and water quality
Diet and exercise	Employment	Housing and transit
Sexual activity	Income	
Tobacco use	Community safety	
	Family and social support	

# What explains variation in spending per IEP student?

- Counties with better health behaviors and better social and economic factors spend more per special needs student.

## Health Behaviors

Alcohol and drug use

Diet and exercise

Sexual activity

Tobacco use

- Counties with larger declines in median household income since 2000 spend more per special needs student.

# What explains the percentage of students enrolled in IEPs?

- Counties with worse social and economic factors have a larger percentage of students enrolled.

## Social and Economic Factors

Education

Employment

Income

Community safety

Family and social support