

# The “Me” in Mental Health Module Evaluation

October 2025

## Overview

Using a prevention science framework, Preparing Individuals for Adulthood and Life (PIAL) is a comprehensive life skills program aimed at educating middle and high school students about the emotional, social, and financial aspects of parenting and relationships. PIAL delivers several unique modules that cover life skills, including (1) Healthy Relationships, (2) Cost of Raising a Child, (3) Resiliency, (4) Mental Health, and (5) Career Readiness. The current report focuses on the [Mental Health](#) module.

The Mental Health module was administered during the 2024-2025 academic year. The module content and delivery were new additions to the PIAL curriculum. Students completed a pre-survey ( $n = 167$ ) before attending the module and a post-survey ( $n = 153$ ) after attending the module. Overall, 132 identifiable students completed both the pre-survey and post-survey. Their responses were matched and allowed analysis of knowledge change across surveys.

## Aims

The analyses in this brief report relate to three aims:

- summarize the demographic characteristics of students involved
- summarize students' change in knowledge of mental health before and after attending the module
- explore themes related to students' reflection of the module

## Procedure

Pre-surveys were administered in the classroom before the delivery of the Mental Health module. Post-surveys were administered after the delivery of the module debriefing session. Students completed the surveys electronically via Qualtrics or through handwritten surveys. Student responses were anonymous; students provided initials, birth date, and birth month to match pre- and post-surveys. All participants provided consent prior to completing both the pre- and post-survey.

The delivery of PIAL modules included arriving at the classroom before class began to set up electronic equipment and activity materials. Students began each module by engaging in a presentation that 1) provided an overview of basic concepts, 2) gave real-world examples, and 3) asked students to think critically and answer questions both independently and together as a group.

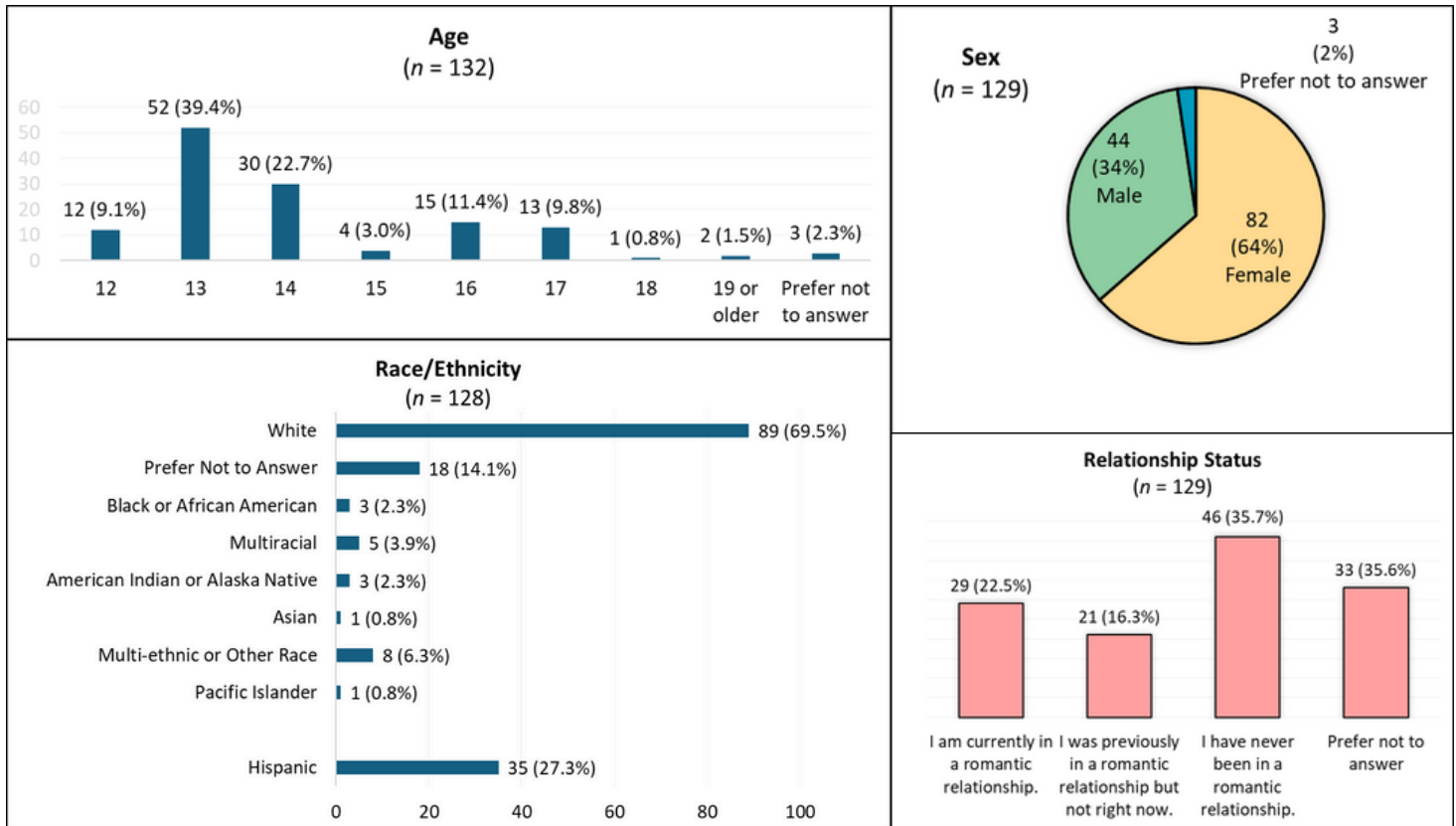
Three questions appeared on both the pre- and post-surveys. Two questions had one correct and two incorrect answer options, and one question asked youth to rate their own mental health. The pre-survey and post-survey each included one unique open-ended question. (See *the long report for more details on assessment questions and answers*)



Acknowledgments: The Iowa State University Child Welfare Research and Training Project conducted this work through a contract with the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (BOC-24-003, Carl Weems PI).

# 1 Demographics

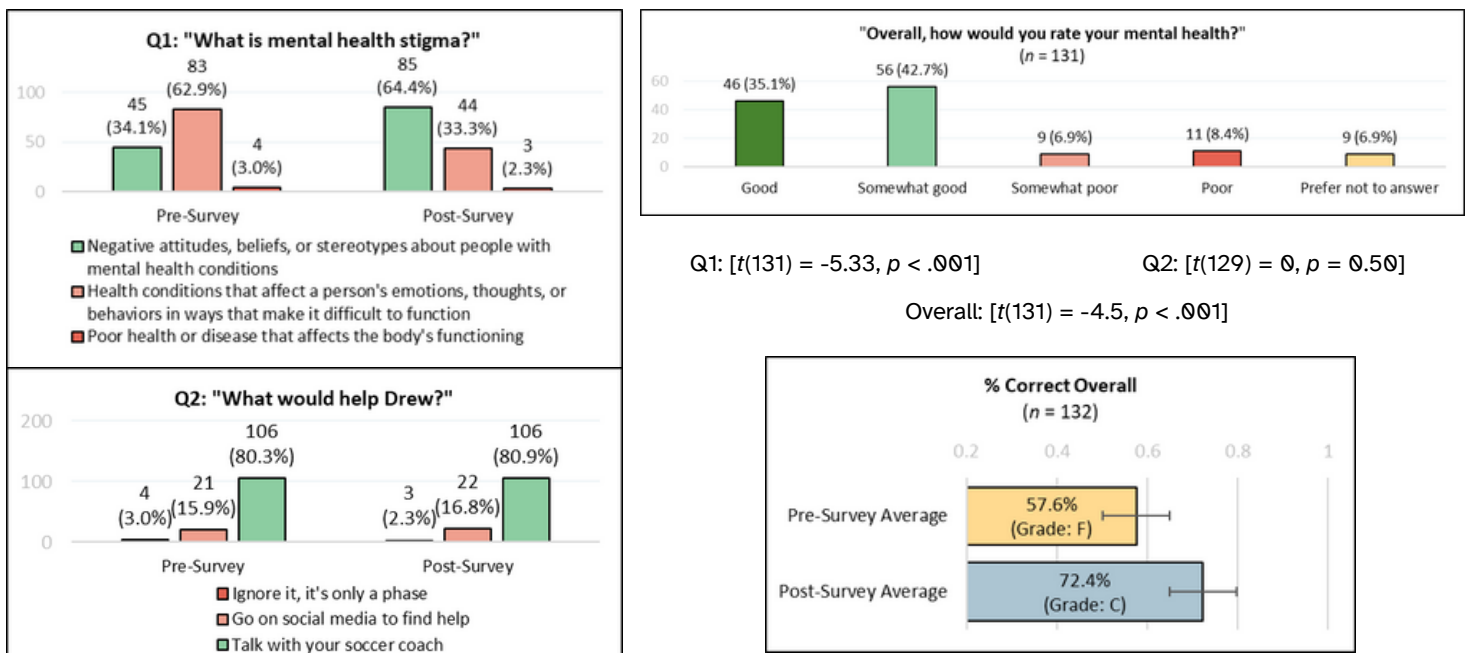
Demographic data were calculated based on responses to the matched pre- and post-surveys ( $n = 132$ ) and are displayed in the figures below. Youth were predominantly white, majority aged 13, and mostly female.



\*Four youth (2.0%) were missing race information and three youth (2.3%) were missing sex and relationship status information.

# 2 Change in Knowledge

Various statistical tests were used to calculate the change in scores from the pre-survey to the post-survey. Findings suggest some positive change in students' knowledge of mental health. Notably, one item on the surveys showed statistically significant improvement (see figures below). The data suggest strong improvement in select areas and high baseline knowledge in others. Overall, youth positively rated their own mental health. (See the long report for more details on statistical analyses and results)



### 3 Student Reflections

Prior to attending the Mental Health module, youth were asked what they would like to learn about mental health on the pre-survey through an open-ended response. Using responses from all participating youth ( $n = 167$ ), responses were categorized into 8 emerging themes. Youth may have provided a response that spanned across multiple themes. Most youth (66%) identified they wanted to learn about a specific concept, and 6% of youth did not know what they wanted to learn.

"What do you want to learn about mental health?"

#### Understand what mental health really is

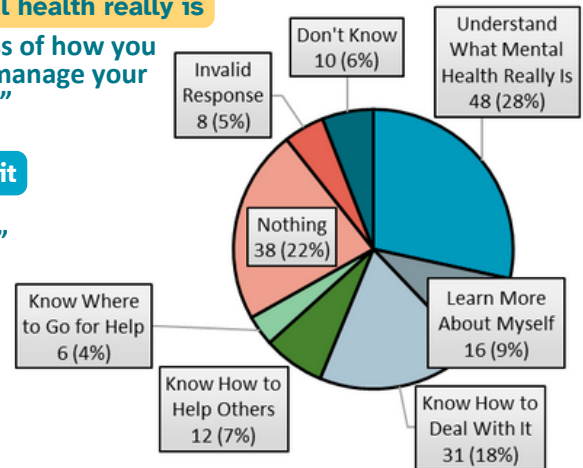
"The overall wellness of how you think, behave and manage your feelings."

#### Know how to deal with it

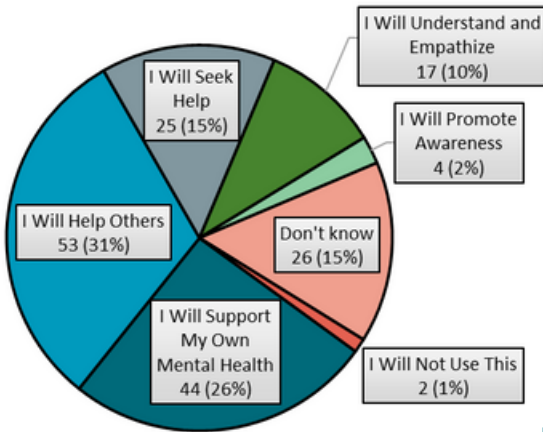
"How to stay positive when times are difficult"

#### Learn more about myself

"I want to know about my social well-being"



"How will you use what you've learned about mental health in the future?"



#### I will help others

"I will help my friends and stand up for people."

#### I will seek help

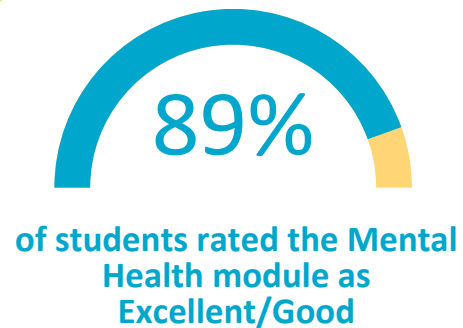
"I will talk to someone I trust if I need help mentally."

#### I will understand and empathize

"I will be able to understand people more."

Participating youth who completed a post-survey provided an open-ended response to the question "How will you use what you've learned about mental health in the future?" ( $n = 129$ ). Responses were categorized into 7 emerging themes. Youth may have provided a response that spanned across multiple themes. Most youth (84%) indicated that they will apply what they learned in some way, including "I will help others" (31%), followed by "I will support my own mental health" (26%) and "I will seek help" (15%).

At the end of the post-survey, we asked students to "Rate your overall experience going through the Mental Health module." Of all students who provided a response ( $n = 141$ ), students generally rated that they had a positive experience.



### 4 Conclusions and Future Directions

Nearly all students (89%) expressed positive experiences with the module, noting that it deepened their understanding of their own mental health and provided them with practical tools and insight they intend to use in their personal lives. The evaluation of the Mental Health module highlights the need for a more sensitive quantitative assessment that can better capture the nuances of the module's impact. To address this, we are currently working on developing enhanced assessment tools that will be more effective in measuring the program's influence on students' learning.

To read the long report and to learn more about PIAL, visit <https://childwelfareproject.hs.iastate.edu/>