
**Survey Comment
Report**



**Kewanee 2023
MQPL Survey
Comments**

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Introduction

Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center (Kewanee) is a multi-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 198 people on January 10, 2023. The John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA) conducted a modified short [Measuring the Quality of Prison Life](#) (MQPL) survey by providing enough survey packets (consisting of the [MQPL survey](#), an informed consent notice/instruction sheet, and a privileged mail prepaid business reply envelope addressed to JHA) so that every person incarcerated at Kewanee had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA received 36 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Kewanee through May 3, 2023, representing approximately 18% of the static population.

Below are the comments from the MQPL surveys for the open-ended survey questions followed by marginalia comments. Please note:

- All blank answers have been omitted
- Names and other personally identifying details have been redacted
- Spelling and grammar have been lightly edited for understanding and to account for possible transcriber typos

OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q12. What are the most positive things about life in this prison?

1. School courses, peer led classes and groups, events planned by individuals in custody, one-man showers, gym and yard daily, commissary daily, staff helping with getting a driver's license and state I.D.
2. You have the choice—you can work on bettering yourself or not...just like in Life—It prepares you for success.
3. Movement freely out all day, we make our own schedule yard gym class group store everyday use the phone easily day release a lot of support and preparing you for release staff treats you like a person

4. Friendly & helpful staff & officers, re-entry education, amount of movement, Day release, Food Quality, commissary daily, Patio access & yard all day, Bigger cells, Hot Water in cells & showers, EPSC & EDSC, Programs & groups, re-entry services
5. I get to stay busy with my job & programs free movement
6. There are some opportunities to create avenues for peer led classes, within strict parameters. You can breathe without staff always thinking the worst of you, you can focus on "You". Social-cultural events
7. I am able to create and explore my dream to become a writer
8. Freedom to move and most staff care about us
9. You can change your life if you want too.
10. Being treated like a human being.
11. Movement.
12. Knowing one day you're going home.
13. It's teaching us skills for our release.
14. Respect of staff, Freedom of movement, the Programs, The Food, And the ability to have input on some of the things we want to see the Prison Provide to us.
15. All the programs being out all day, the staff is great food is great.
16. you feel you have a purpose in life
17. The classes they offer + education
18. They care about each person, for real. They care for you and your family, I never thought it was possible but it's real...
19. The education available that gave me understanding about the things I learn and gain knowledge about over the course of my lengthy prison stay
20. The administration, the security staff, the food, the opportunities of becoming a productive citizen upon release and **[NAME REDACTED]** is the best counselor in IDOC history!
21. I have a chance to work on my life when I get out not thinking about staying safe
22. Communication and Hands on Help
23. Nothing
24. Programs, and how fair the staffs are
25. The respect from everyone...
26. programs, day release, day for day sentence credit, less of a barrier between us and them.
27. The brotherhood amongst our peers. The programs in play to get us ready for the free world.
28. Movement, programs, staff, yard, dietary interactions with (some) staff
29. While being guided through programs/work/education I am free to make a schedule that suits me for leisure/study/exercise
30. Working gives you a start at going home with that as a main object
31. Learning from your mistakes

Q13. What are the most negative things about life in this prison?

1. Every teacher is white. There's no African American or Latinx Teachers or counselors. We have a black **[STAFF ROLE REDACTED]** but he's actually from Africa. So he doesn't relate to us the same way a brotha or sista would relate. He thinks our behavior is weird, but **[PERSONAL INFORMATION REDACTED]** and we can't understand what he's saying most of the time.
2. The phone system. The lack of forcing people to do things positive.
3. None Being in prison still here
4. How long it takes to sign new and receive old EPSC contracts, not enough day release jobs, not enough vocational programs, hard to keep programming after 3 months, the visiting room partitions, lunches for day release workers
5. I don't always feel equal to people who brown nose for attention. Some clinical staff show favoritism and go that EXTRA MILE for certain ppl & minimal effort towards others. Can't get classes like others.
6. There aren't many tangible, accredited skills/trades/vocational classes here.
7. NONE
8. I'm in prison
9. The Beds
10. There are people here who should not be here because they do not care about change. They only care about good time and work release.
11. Education & College
12. Being lockup, you can't go home
13. Staff inconsistencies.
14. Not a lot of opportunities to get haircuts. Needs more phones. Because Inmates run the phones, And it leads to Inmate thinking.
15. inmate coming from another prison with the same mental mind
16. Not being able to go home, commissary shortages
17. People who don't realize what this place means, and how it can change their lives or both sides/staff and us.
18. The continuous self destructive behavior generated from self-limiting beliefs, self esteem issues, upholding the prison facade that represents convictism, poor + hideous vocabulary, criminal thinking and too many unsave, backbiting or backsliding
19. As all prisons, our visits are under siege—embargoed! We have not seen our families in years, non-vaccination, some family died I never got to see again. Watch dog that. Statute says 7 visits. They are purposely locking out our visits. Elderly do not know how to check in, the union has tried for the longest to stop physical visits, its finally here. Check the stats when visits were open to now.
20. Nothing negative to say.
21. I'm still in here.
22. Missing your loved ones

23. Bias is still happening between whites and Blacks and who they give the good job, day release, ATC, and even EDSC good in general to.
24. Not enough opportunities for guys to earn work release and or good time
25. Your not free.
26. those not committed to the programming. They're in the way.
27. I haven't really gotten the real medical attention that I need. The water in the housing units taste bad, especially in the cells.
28. Political talk
29. Lake Land college is not up and running well to offer many classes
30. Some of the staff has bad attitudes with the inmates
31. having to do time away from family

Q14. What suggestions do you have for improvement?

1. Hire some non-security BIPOC staff. Hire a committee liaison staff member to help with planning events.
2. 5 phone calls max per person per 24 hour period
3. Get more staff so we could more people working day release provide hands on vocational classes welding, H-vac
4. More counselors to help, improve day release lunch menu with some variety, Hire teachers for welding & other vocational classes, lift COVID restrictions
5. Be fair, we're all here to prepare to go home. Don't just help your favorites help all of us. Give us a chance to succeed by allowing all of us to take part in ATC, Day Release, Jobs, etc.
6. College classes (in class, online, correspondence); vocational programs; easier permission to get materials donated and approval of peer led classes.
7. More classes
8. More career classes. Better technology to prepare for today's world.
9. Get us new beds, so we wont go home with our backs hurting.
10. No one should be allowed to this prison unless they have done 15 or more years. Not people who have only experience prison for a few years.
11. Bring back community colleges!
12. More programs.
13. More programs.
14. Add more phones, 2 more on each deck, then everything will be perfect
15. pay close attention who transfer to this prison
16. Offer electrical classes + more educational classes + More contracts for good time
17. More classes. But they think you should take this prison and make it the model for other prison because they change people because they believe in you and help give you the up to date tools to help you win in life.

18. A revival of repentance from the inside out mentally, figuratively from the depth of the soul
19. More programs.
20. Let our loved ones come when they can to visit, not dictate—which means we're denied. Take the partitions out so we don't sit like animals in a cage (Behind) plastic like monkeys. NEVER no food in concession machine—who cares about us losing family. Kids don't want to come anymore. And employees ask—whats wrong with visits?
21. We need more programming like welding and other trades.
22. Give the people a chance to work outside the gate at jobs that pay wages for a person to save some money.
23. Everything is available for every individual to take advantage
24. To have hands on experiences training programs. More people going to work release.
25. Keep the family visits that they have now
26. Vocational classes. Not only one for 200 persons, but several. And more than one profession.
27. More staff, more true classes thats not peer led
28. Sensitivity classes on Race and Politics
29. Push for the development of more vocational classes that offer living wage jobs upon completion
30. More programs and better officers
31. take away the glass in the visiting room

Q15. Please write any other comments or feedback on this survey below.

1. This is a good place, positive, just like everything A few bad apples slide through. They should be sent back. Zero tolerance there are 1000's of people who would love this opportunity. WE NEED college Course.
2. Warden **[NAME REDACTED]** & **[NAME REDACTED]** are doing a fantastic Job with creating new Day Release opportunities. **[NAME REDACTED]** is great for advocating our best interests to Springfield. This is, in my opinion, the best place to be if you are in custody in Illinois.
3. **[NAMES REDACTED]** Are all worthy of praise because they really care I mean REALLY care about Helping us. **[NAME REDACTED]** and **[NAME REDACTED]** too they all are HONEST straight forwards & appreciated
4. Overall things here have been up to par but one can't forget that we're still incarcerated we just can't get up and walk out if we wanted.
5. Thank GOD I'm at Kewanee, but Centralia was everything negative this survey stands for, especially the way Higher ranking officers treated us...It was absolutely disgusting!

My # is [REDACTED], you can quote me on Q15, I'll never be back after [YEAR REDACTED] anyway. That's a promise. One and Done! Thank you for your work!

6. Thank you for the work you do. I pray you continue your work and continue to investigate the prison life and its staff.
7. I have been to six different Prisons over my [20+] yrs. of incarceration and no other compares to the Programs, Food, Free movement, Respect and treatment we receive here at Kewanee.
8. The truth in sentencing needs to be changed. I can do all the programs and get all the degrees, work, and not earn a single day off my sentence. When some guy pushes a broom for 15 min and gets a half day off. It's not fair, It's discrimination. 85% is the punishment, Not earning good times is double punishment!
9. blessed to be here
10. Those people should be thanked and given all of the tools they need to continue their work because they are changing lives
11. Thank you all! For all you've done, continued to do and have to go through to achieve the success thus far. There is certainly a long road ahead of the important issue they are not willing to compromise on or at least consider yet keep pushing and praying. Love Ya!!!
12. There are some favored individuals in custody running Kewanee Prison
13. The history of these surveys changes nothing, never have. Sad to say. Pray they were real + would.
14. I'm happy to be here, This place is by far the best place to do time in IDOC.
15. I will say over all I'm truly comfortable there and I do not have any problems with the staff or the other people incarcerated there it's me that I have a problem with
16. The commissaries in IL. need to stop selling high blood pressure and sweet and fine something healthier. You come to prison healthy but leave with some kind of disease/or worst you might not make it home!
17. This jail opens so many doors for people who want something from themselves
18. Although Springfield entertains the concept of Kewanee L.S.R.C, it doesn't seem to be committed to it. There are barriers blocking the progress of the aims this center professes. Springfield can remove those barriers and should remove them, if this center is more than a show piece and is expected to succeed.
19. We can use the phone on our tablets. By us being in these groups and things so when we make it back to the wing everybody on the wing trying to get a phone call before we have to go back out.
20. People leaving prisons need a relocating strategy job. Readiness, thereby sending guys to work release before they go home and then that might give guys a leg up
21. This place is really geared towards the development of free thinking individuals who have goals in mind. And while that is great for some most individuals need more developed curriculum to guide them towards a goal once it's been set.
22. Thank you all 4 what you do

OTHER MARGINALIA COMMENTS

Q2. Race or ethnicity (White, Black, Hispanic or Latino, or Other)

1. [Other] Moorish-American

Q8. Mark response that best describes how you feel (Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Neutral = N, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree = SD)

Relationships between staff and incarcerated people are good.

1. [D] Some

Staff here treat incarcerated people fairly when applying the rules.

1. [SD] They do what they want

I get along well with the officers on my unit.

1. [A] some

Q9. Mark response that best describes how you feel (Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Neutral = N, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree = SD)

This prison is controlled by incarcerated people rather than staff.

1. [D] Phones

I feel that I am treated with respect by staff.

1. [A] By [REDACTED]

My experience in this prison is painful.

1. [A] Of Course It's Prison

There is a hierarchy among incarcerated people.

1. [A] Always

There are a few incarcerated people who run things on this unit.

1. [A] Phones

Decisions are dominated by concerns about security.

1. [SA] That's what they say?

Q10. Mark response that best describes how you feel (Strongly Agree = SA, Agree = A, Neutral = N, Disagree = D, Strongly Disagree = SD)

When important decisions are made about me, I am treated as an individual, not a number.

1. [SD] 85% NOT FAIR

Staff help incarcerated people maintain contact with outside supports.

1. [A] OK

This prison is better now than it was last year.

1. [N] Wasn't here



This report was written by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at (312) 264-4081 or jvollen@thejha.org

Incarcerated individuals can send privileged mail to report concerns and issues to the John Howard Association, P.O. Box 10042, Chicago, IL 60610-0042. JHA staff are reading every letter and tracking this information to monitor what is occurring behind prison walls and to advocate for humane policies and practices. Family and friends can contact JHA via our website www.thejha.org or by leaving us a voicemail at (312) 291-9183.

Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails, and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving prison conditions. JHA humbly thanks everyone who agreed to be interviewed for this report and who graciously shared their experiences and insights with us.

