

***SMOC*** *South Middlesex Opportunity Council*

***Reentry Housing Program***

*FY 2007 Annual Report*

***SMOC*** *South Middlesex Opportunity Council*  
300 Howard Street  
Framingham, MA 01702  
[www.smoc.org](http://www.smoc.org)

*October 16, 2007*

## *Table of Contents*

<i>Executive Summary</i>	<i>2-3</i>
<i>Agency Description</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Agency Vision, Mission &amp; Values</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Program Description</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>RHP Organizational Chart</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>RHP Map of Regional Offices</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Statistical Data for FY 2007 Releases</i>	<i>8 - 16</i>
<i>Housing Terms</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Challenges and Successes: Three Case Studies</i>	<i>17 - 18</i>

## *Executive Summary*

*2007 marks the fourth consecutive year that the South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) has contracted with the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) to operate the Reentry Housing Program (RHP), a homeless prevention program for inmates releasing from DOC custody.*

*Each year an estimated 10% of inmates releasing from DOC custody are at risk of becoming homeless, meaning they are likely to have no permanent place to live upon release from prison. National studies indicate that homelessness increases the likelihood that an individual will re-offend. Assisting former inmates to find a safe affordable place to live is therefore in the best interest of public safety<sup>1</sup>. SMOC is proud to be partnering with the DOC in this important work.*

*SMOC is pleased to demonstrate our accomplishments in this annual report. Our dedicated team of housing professionals work hard to meet the challenges of securing safe affordable housing for former inmates, to ensure that inmates are extended every possible opportunity to succeed in the community, with the ultimate goal being to reduce recidivism and promote public safety.*

*During Fiscal Year 2007, SMOC worked to assist a total of 435 individuals who were referred by the Department of Correction because they were at risk of homelessness. This total number includes 146 individuals who were active cases at the turnover of the 2006-2007 fiscal year (some still incarcerated, some already released and in the community), plus 289 new referrals received during FY 2007. Of the total 435 served by SMOC:*

- 246 individuals (57%) were released from DOC custody to the community during FY 2007.*
- 189 (43%) were either released from custody prior to the start of the 2007 fiscal year or were still in custody at the close of the fiscal year.*

*Because we really want to know “**What happens to people when they get out?**”, this report will focus on the data for people who released from custody during a set time period, rather than the total number of people served (which would include people who were released last year and people who are currently still in custody). Therefore, while the program served and continues to serve a larger set of individuals, **the annual report will focus strictly on those 246 individuals who were released from custody to the community from the period beginning July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.***

*The DOC is in the final stages of developing a sophisticated electronic database that will allow us to capture and report program information. It is anticipated that the database will be completed early in FY 2008. The current method for reporting involves manually collecting data. It is important to keep in mind, that the RHP is a voluntary program, meaning inmates are not required to work with us. Collecting and reporting data for this type of programming presents a unique set of challenges. With the goal of answering the question, “**What happens to people when they get out?**” the annual report will focus on:*

---

<sup>1</sup> (Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry: Research Findings from the Urban Institute’s Prisoner Reentry Portfolio, Washington, DC. <http://www.urban.org>).  
SMOC Reentry Housing Program (RHP) FY2007 Release Data (Revised 10/16/07)

- *the numbers of inmates who utilized service,*
- *the institutions they came from*
- *the communities they went to*
- *the types of housing assistance they received*
- *the numbers that dropped out*
- *the numbers who received post-release supervision (i.e. probation or parole)*
- *Additionally, because of the public interest in sex-offenders, some of the data delineates between non-sex offenders and sex-offenders*

*Finally, while data and statistics provide valuable information, they do not tell the whole story. In order to provide the reader with a broader understanding of the type of work that is done on behalf of individuals in order to prevent homelessness, three case studies are included at the end of the report. These help to paint a picture, and represent another valuable perspective on the RHP.*

*Kelley Doel  
Director of Operations*

## ***Agency Description***

*Founded in 1966, SMOC is a community-based private, non-profit corporation that operates a vast network of programs and services targeted to low income households. As the Community Action Agency for the greater MetroWest and Blackstone Valley area, SMOC has more than 40 years experience providing housing and shelter programs, mental health and substance abuse services, child care and preschool education, adult education, employment and skills training, community services, nutrition, crisis intervention, energy and financial assistance, and is a leading developer of low-income housing in the Commonwealth.*

*In 1986, SMOC created a subsidiary development corporation, South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation (SMNPHC) in response to the need for decent, safe and affordable housing for homeless and low-income households targeting disadvantaged individuals, families and disabled adults. SMNPHC has demonstrated an imaginative approach to meeting regional housing and community development needs by integrating human service programs with housing and community development initiatives. This service-enriched approach allows the agency to meet programmatic needs from both a social service and real estate perspective. The network of services has expanded many-fold over the past two decades as SMNPHC has acquired and developed new properties outside the MetroWest region, cultivating parallel services through strategic partnerships.*

*Essential to the effectiveness of SMOC is the involvement of various segments of the community in the policy and decision making process of the organization. One-third of the SMOC Board is comprised of representatives of the low-income community, another third are chief elected officials or their appointed representatives and the remaining third are representatives of the private sector. SMOC guarantees high quality, accessible, individualized, culturally appropriate services to any individual regardless of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or ability to pay for services.*

*Agency Vision, Mission and Values*

**Vision**

*Organizing Resources For Social Change And Economic Independence*

**Mission**

*To improve the quality of life of low-income and disadvantaged individuals and families by advocating for their needs and rights; providing services; educating the community; building a community of support; participating in coalitions with other advocates and searching for new resources and partnerships.*

**Values**

*Respect for the dignity & value of every individual.  
Appreciation for the value of diversity and an end to racism and discrimination.  
Freedom from violence including domestic violence and sexual assault.  
The right to housing and the abolishment of homelessness.  
The right to health care.  
Freedom from hunger.  
The elimination of poverty.  
The right to work for a living wage.  
Easy access to social supports through co-location of social services.  
SMOC's Employees are its greatest strength.*

## ***Program Description***

*National studies indicate that housing is a critical factor in reducing recidivism<sup>2</sup>. The Reentry Housing Program (RHP) is a homeless prevention program designed to help inmates releasing from DOC custody who have been identified as being at risk of becoming homeless. SMOC provides pre-release housing search assistance six months prior to an inmate's release and post-release housing search and stabilization services for up to a year after the individual releases from custody. As this is a voluntary program, inmates choose whether or not they wish to participate throughout the entire process. SMOC is pleased to be partnering with the DOC in this effort to prevent homelessness.*

*Based on an existing **SMOC model which received national recognition as a winner in the 2000 HUD Best Practices competition**, the RHP is staffed by five regional Housing Specialists who are located in Boston, Fall River, Lowell, Springfield and Worcester. Housing Specialists meet individually with inmates who are referred to the program prior to their release from custody. A housing assessment is completed with each inmate to identify both resources and barriers to housing. Based on the assessment, an Individual Service Plan is developed with the **goal of securing suitable housing prior to release**.*

*Housing Specialists conduct a thorough housing search for each inmate referred to the program. The housing search is tailored to the unique needs of each individual (based on finances, family support, treatment needs, criminal history, etc.) and explores every possible housing option available to them. Housing Specialists work together with the inmate, DOC personnel, and in many cases the inmate's family to make sure that the inmate has somewhere to stay on the day of release. In some instances, the only option may be a temporary one, i.e. with family, friends, or an emergency homeless shelter -- making post-release services a critical component of the program. As part of the RHP's post-release services, Housing Specialists continue to work with individuals for up to a year after their release, meeting with them regularly and assisting them as they take the steps to acquire income, obtain necessary support services, and ultimately, secure affordable housing.*

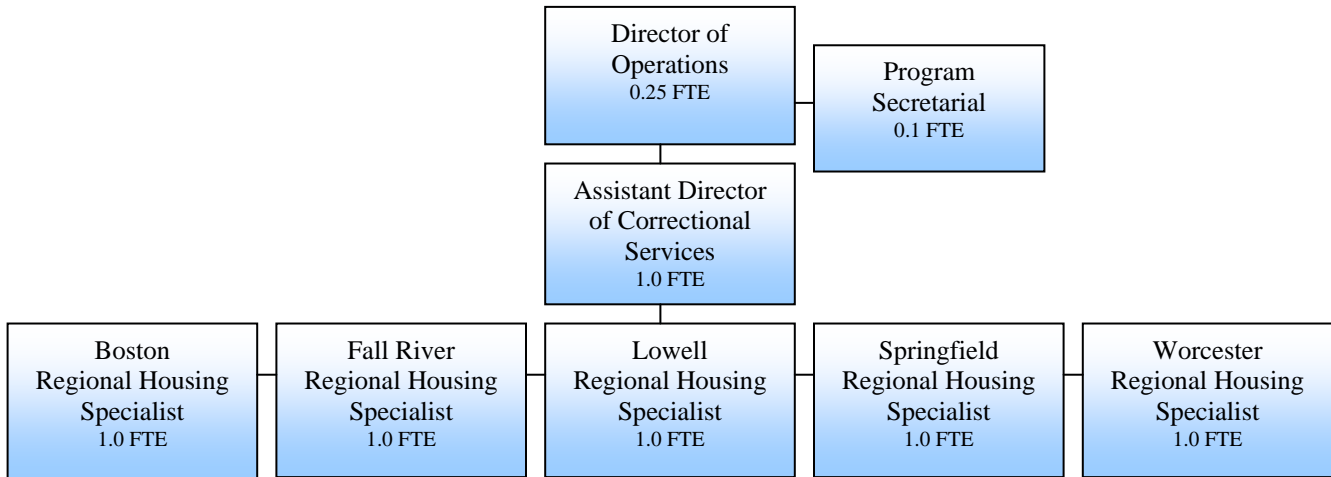
*As referenced above, national studies indicate that housing is a key factor in reducing recidivism. The type of assistance that the RHP provides **can mean the difference between someone having a stable place to live or ending up homeless and living on the streets, more likely to re-offend**.*

---

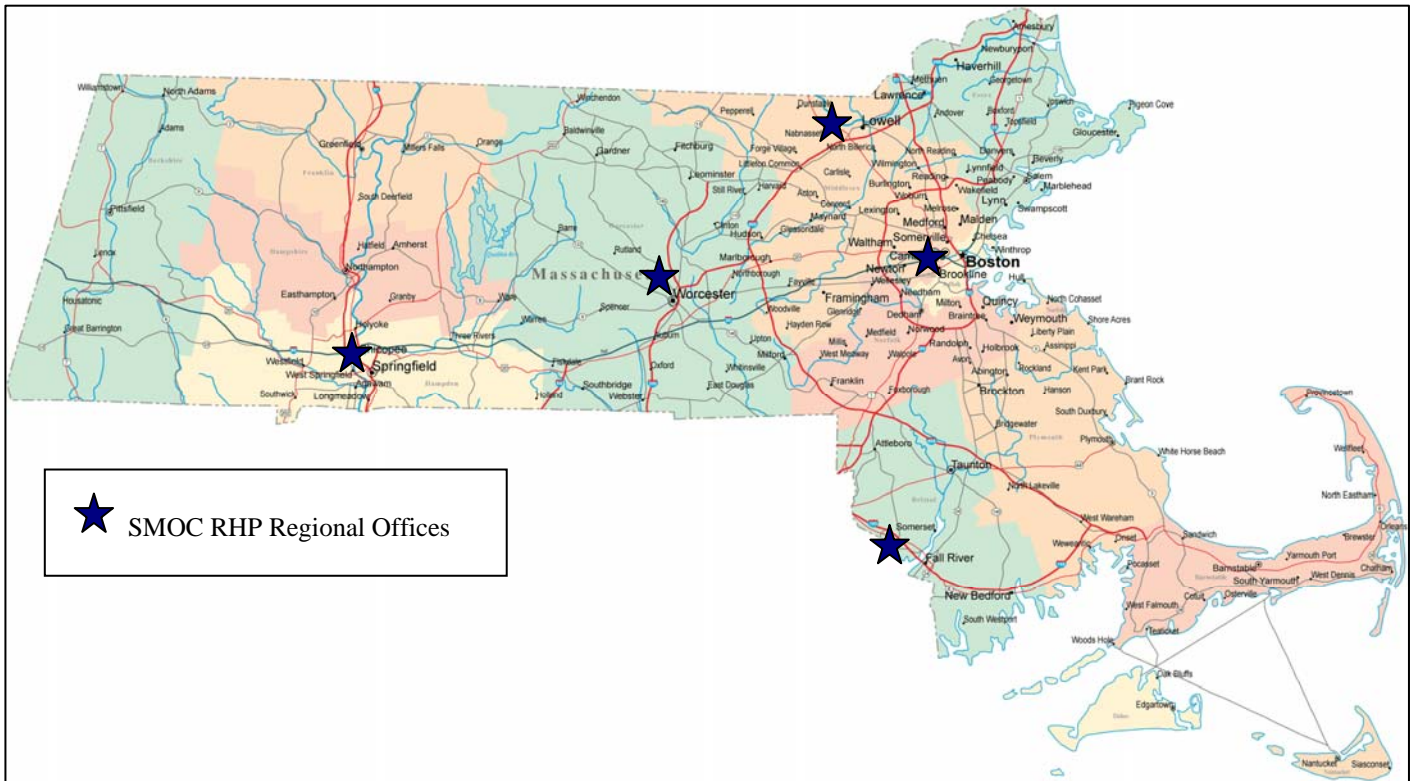
<sup>2</sup> (Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry: Research Findings from the Urban Institute's Prisoner Reentry Portfolio, Washington, DC. <http://www.urban.org>).  
SMOC Reentry Housing Program (RHP) FY2007 Release Data (Revised 10/16/07)

## SMOC RHP Organizational Chart

- A total of 6.35 FTE's



## Map of SMOC RHP Regional Offices





## Statistical Data for FY 2007 Releases

*This Annual Report looks at the data for 246 inmates who released from DOC custody during FY2007.*

Number of Inmates Referred to RHP Who Released During FY2007	n=246
Number of Inmates Who Received Housing Assistance Prior to Release	205 (83%)
Number of Referrals Withdrawn	20 (8%)
Number of Inmates Who Refused Services	21 (9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>

Pre-Release Placement Assistance	<i>(See Graph A)</i>
Number of Inmates Who Received Housing Assistance Prior to Release	205
Number Who Secured Own Placement	48 (23%)
Number of Individuals Who Accepted SMOC Placement	118 (58%)
Number of Individuals Who Did Not Accept Placement or No-Showed Upon Release	39 (19%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>

Housing Placements	
Number of Individuals Placed	118
Number of Placements in Temporary	44
Number of Placements in Transitional	57
Number of Placements in Permanent	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>134*</b>

\* More than one placement may be made for an individual. For example, an individual may initially be placed in **Temporary Housing** and later secure a placement in **Permanent Housing**. RHP works with individuals for up to a year post-release with the goal of securing permanent housing.

Post-Release Assistance	
Number Who Voluntarily Participated in Services Post Release/Post Placement	76 (64%)
Number Who Ended Services Upon Release/Placement	42 (36%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>

<b>Number of Inmates Referred to RHP Who Released During FY2007</b>	<b>n=246</b>
---	--------------

<b>Male vs. Female</b>	
Number of Males	225 (91%)
Number of Females	21 ( 9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>

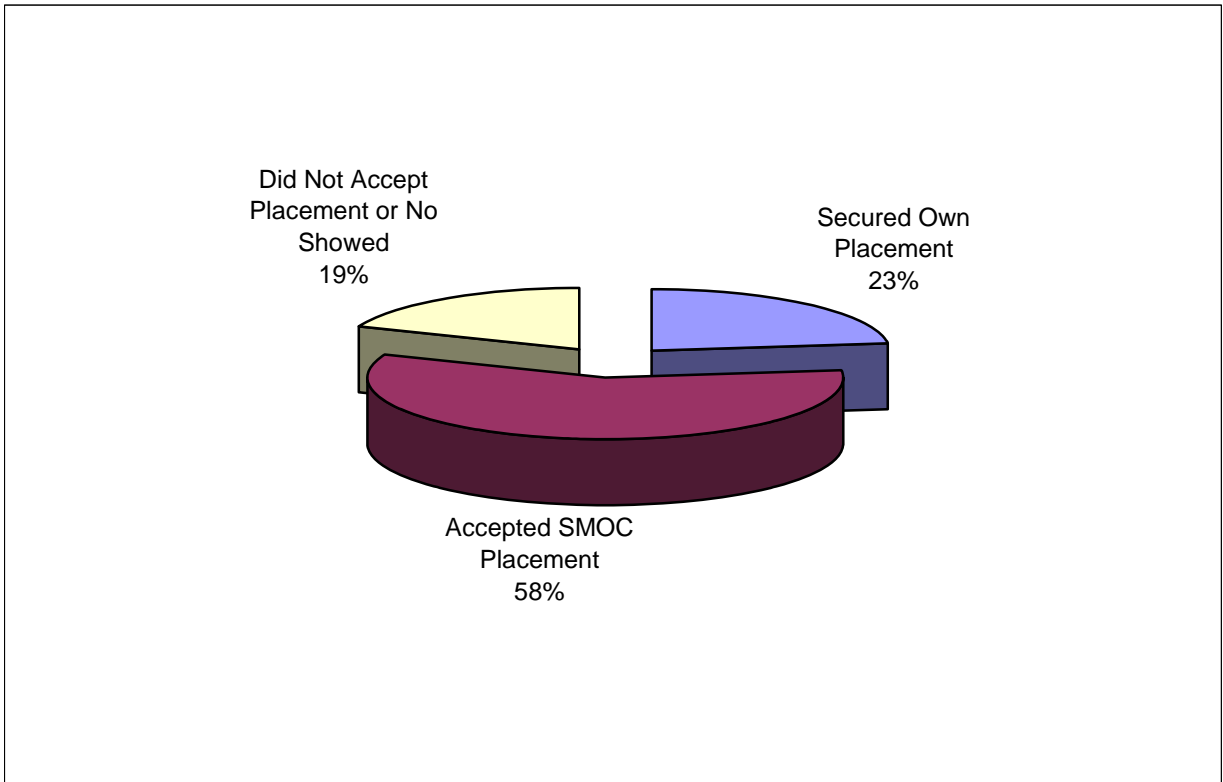
<b>Non-Sex Offenders vs. Sex Offenders</b>	
Number of Non-Sex Offenders	174 (71%)
Number of Sex Offenders	72 (29%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>

Number of Inmates with Post-Release Supervision	Non-Sex Offenders	Sex Offenders	All Offenders
Probation	65 (37%)	35 (49%)	100 (40%)
Parole	19 (11%)	5 (7%)	24 (10%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b> <b>(48% of Non-Sex Offenders)</b>	<b>40</b> <b>(56% of Sex Offenders)</b>	<b>124</b> <b>(50% of All Offenders)</b>

**Chart 1: Releases By Institution (n=246)**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Total</b>
Bay State Correctional Center	2
Boston Pre-Release	20
MCI-Cedar Junction	17
MCI-Concord	14
MCI-Framingham	8
NCCI-Gardner	40
Mass Treatment Center	11
Northeast Correctional Center	3
MCI-Norfolk	20
Old Colony Correctional Center	7
Pondville Correctional Center	15
MCI-Plymouth	1
Souza Baranowski Correctional Center	29
MCI-Shirley	46
South Middlesex Correctional Center	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>246</b>

**Graph A: Pre-Release Placement Assistance (n=205)**

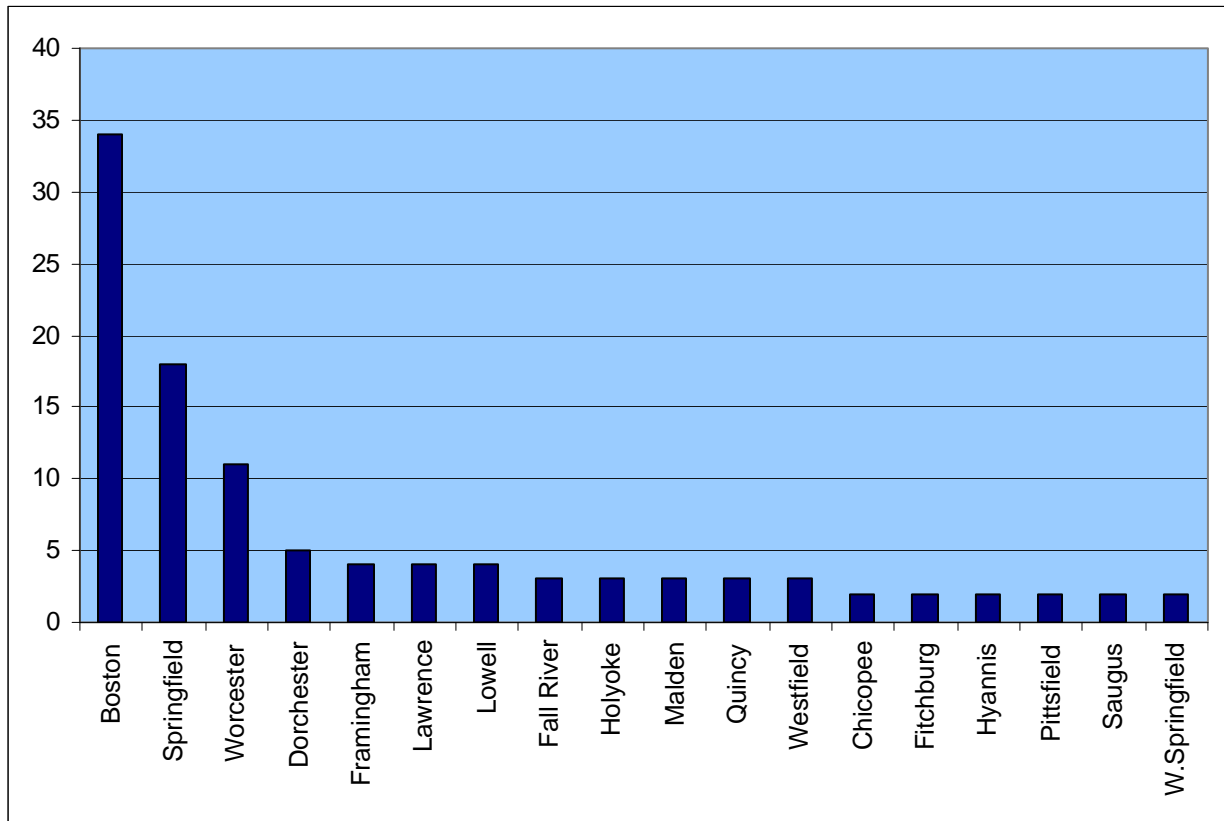


**Chart 2: Placements By City (n=134)**

City	Temporary	Transitional	Permanent	Total
Acton		1		1
Adams		1		1
Amherst			1	1
Bedford		1		1
Boston	23	7	4	34
Bridgewater		1		1
Cambridge	1			1
Chelsea			1	1
Chicopee		1	1	2
Dorchester		3	2	5
Dracut		1		1
E. Boston			1	1
Everett		1		1
Fall River		1	2	3
Fitchburg			2	2
Framingham		4		4
Holyoke		1	2	3
Hyannis	1	1		2
Jamaica Plain	1			1
Lawrence		3	1	4
Lowell	1		3	4
Lynn		1		1
Malden		3		3
Mattapan			1	1
Millbury		1		1
New Bedford		1		1
Newburyport		1		1
Northampton	1			1
New York, NY*			1	1
Oxford		1		1
Pittsfield	1		1	2
Providence, RI*			1	1
Quincy	2	1		3
Randolph		1		1
Roxbury			1	1
Salem	1			1
Saugus		2		2
Springfield	9	7	2	18
Tiverton, RI*		1		1
W. Springfield		1	1	2
Waltham		1		1
Westfield	2		1	3
Weymouth		1		1
Winchendon		1		1
Worcester	1	6	4	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>134</b>

\*RHP does not provide services outside of MA. However, in these cases, inmates secured out of state placements and received assistance from RHP in the process.

**Graph 2: Placements By City (n=134)\***

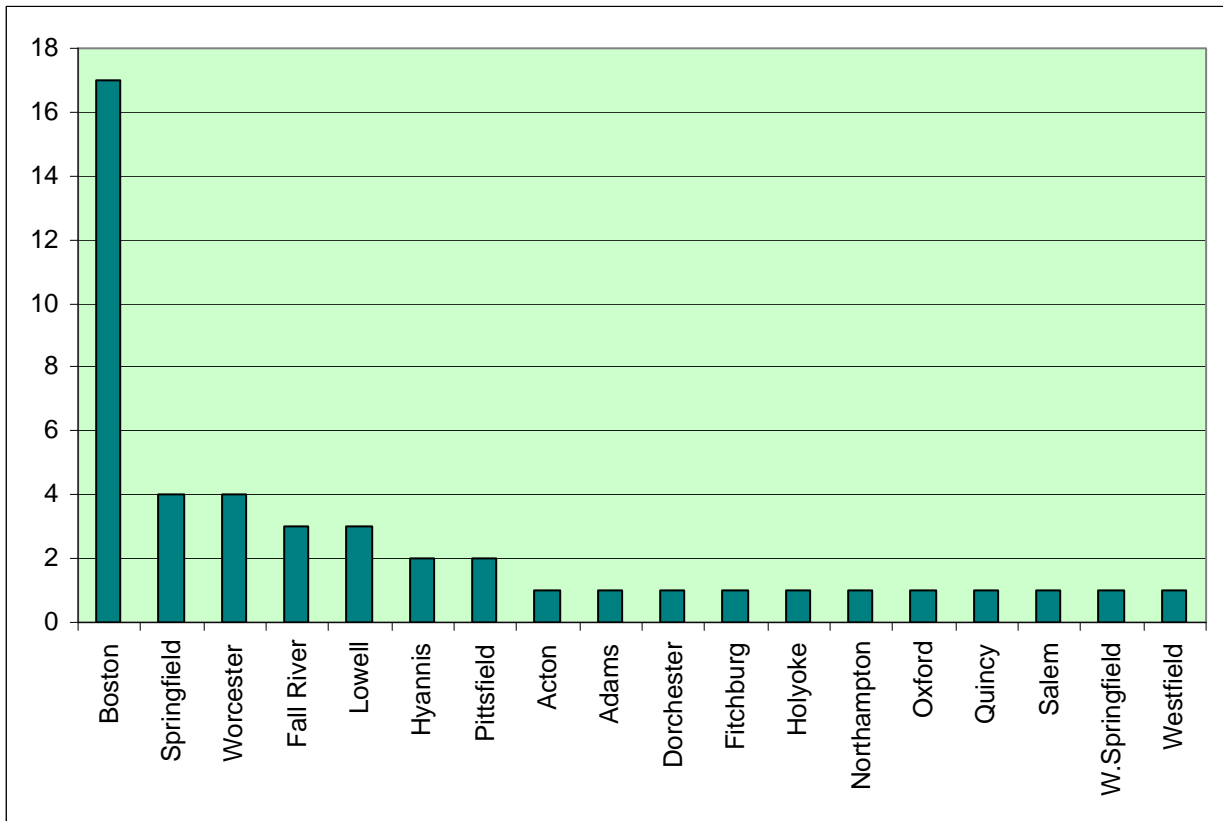


\* Only Cities with 2 or more placements are included in the graph. (27 Cities had 1 placement.)

**Chart 3: Sex Offender Placements By City (n=46)**

City	Temporary	Transitional	Permanent	Total
Acton		1		1
Adams		1		1
Amherst				0
Bedford				0
Boston	14	1	2	17
Bridgewater				0
Cambridge				0
Chelsea				0
Chicopee				0
Dorchester		1		1
Dracut				0
E. Boston				0
Everett				0
Fall River		1	2	3
Fitchburg			1	1
Framingham				0
Holyoke		1		1
Hyannis	1	1		2
Jamaica Plain				0
Lawrence				0
Lowell	1		2	3
Lynn				0
Malden				0
Mattapan				0
Millbury				0
N.Bedford				0
Newburyport				0
Northampton	1			1
NY, NY				0
Oxford		1		1
Pittsfield	1		1	2
Prov., RI				0
Quincy	1			1
Randolph				0
Roxbury				0
Salem	1			1
Saugus				0
Springfield	2	2		4
Tiverton, RI				0
W.Springfield			1	1
Waltham				0
Westfield			1	1
Weymouth				0
Winchendon				0
Worcester	1	1	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>46</b>

**Graph 3: Sex Offender Placements By City (n=46)\***



\* All cities where sex offenders were placed are included in the graph. (11 Cities had 1 placement.)

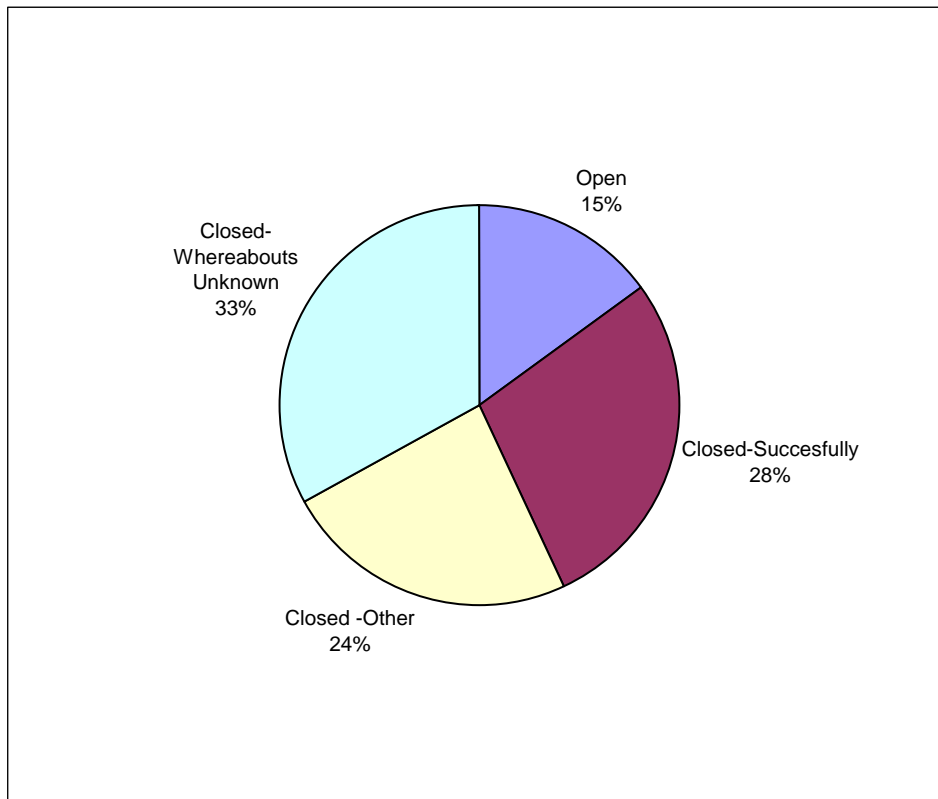
**Chart 4: Status of Released Cases at Year End (n=246)**

<b>STATUS AT YEAR END</b>	<b>Non –Sex Offenders</b>	<b>Sex Offenders</b>	<b>All Offenders</b>
<b>Closed-Successfully:</b>			
Secured Own Placement	35	13	48
Completed Program	6	4	10
Transferred to Alternate Program	12	0	12
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Closed-Other:</b>			
Refused Services	15	6	21
Referral Withdrawn	15	5	20
Non-Compliance	7	1	8
Needs Exceeded Program	4	2	6
Disagreement w/ Rules	1	1	2
Criminal Activity	1	0	1
Deceased	1	0	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Closed-Whereabouts Unknown:</b>			
Closed – Whereabouts Unknown	58	23	81
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>TOTAL CASES CLOSED</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>Total Closed = 210</b>
<b>TOTAL CASES OPEN</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>Total Open = 36</b>
<b>TOTAL ALL CASES</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>Total All = 246</b>

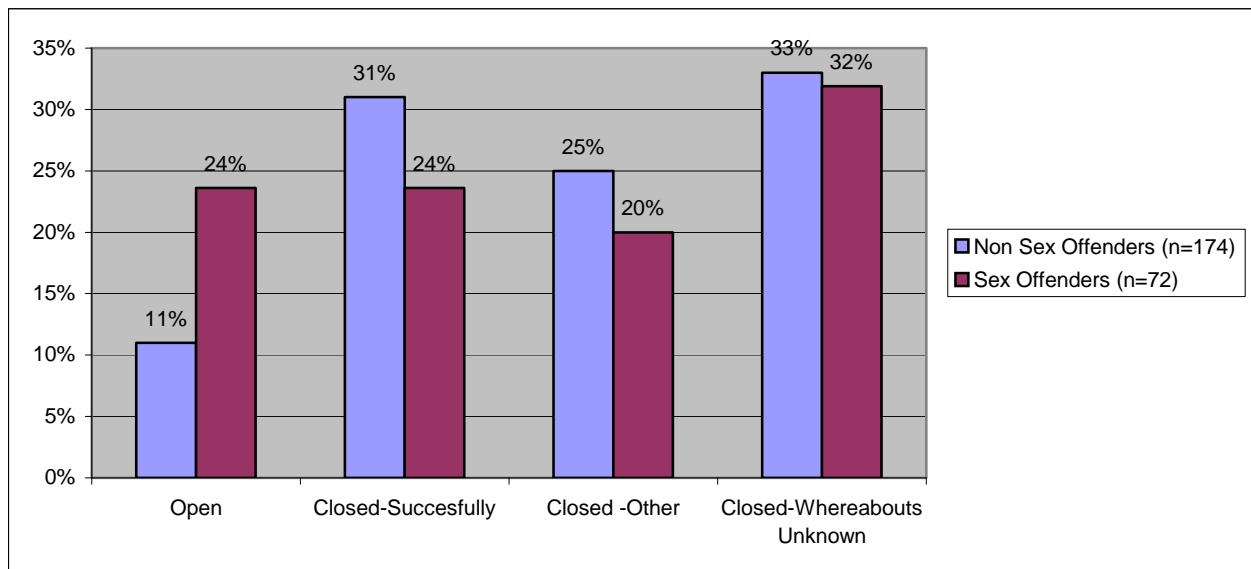
*(Refer to Graphs 4a and 4b on page 16)*



**Graph 4a: Status of All Released Cases at Year End (n=246)**



**Graph 4b: Comparison Case Status Released Non-Sex Offenders vs. Sex Offenders at Year End (n=246)**



## ***Housing Terms***

- Temporary Housing**     *Housing that is not suitable for the long term (i.e. short stays with family/friends or emergency homeless shelters)*
- Transitional Housing**     *Low-cost housing designed for formerly homeless individuals – usually in the form of a rooming house. The term “transitional” is used because people generally use this type of housing as a way to transition from living in a shelter to living in more traditional permanent housing. Some transitional housing subsidies are limited to 2 years.*
- Permanent Housing**     *Housing where a person can reside indefinitely; where it is reasonable for them to sustain rent. This includes low-income and market rate apartments and houses.*

*The Reentry Housing Program provides housing search and housing stabilization services to inmates for a year post-release. While some inmates are able to secure housing prior to their release, others are unable to do so due to circumstances that we cannot control. These individuals must stay in temporary housing situations. Temporary housing is not considered suitable placement and is only used as a last resort until transitional or permanent housing can be secured. Both Transitional and Permanent housing are considered to be successful placements.*

## ***Challenges and Successes: Three Case Studies***

*Inmates who are referred to the Reentry Housing Program face multiple challenges to successful reintegration into the community. In addition to lacking family support and financial resources, many have serious disabling conditions, cognitive impairments, medical issues, etc. that make it especially challenging for them to find gainful employment and pay for housing. Some were homeless prior to their incarceration. Resources for these individuals are limited, and not easily obtained. Without the Reentry Housing Program, they would be at greater risk for becoming homeless and living on the streets. The stresses of being homeless would lead some to re-offend – prison being a better alternative than life on the streets.*

*The following case studies illustrate the types of assistance that the RHP provides and the process that leads to an inmate securing stable housing, with the ultimate goal being to reduce recidivism and promote public safety. Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

### ***Case Study A***

*Eric was released from DOC custody in December under probation supervision. He had enough money saved up to pay first and last months rent. Prior to his release, his RHP Housing Specialist was able to help him secure a studio apartment. Eric had experience working as a print press operator. He was highly motivated and diligently pursued all recommended potential job resources. Within two weeks of moving into his apartment, he was able to secure full-time employment at a printing company. He was able to ride his bicycle back and forth to work. After four months on the job, he obtained a drivers license and purchased a car. In addition to his full-time printing job, Eric also works part-time doing property maintenance for his landlord. He has met all the conditions of his probation and is doing well as of the writing of this report.*

### **Case Study B**

*Dan released from DOC custody in February of 2006. He is required to register as a sex offender and had no savings and no place to live, even temporarily. Dan was motivated and willing to work. However, due to a seizure disorder that has affected his cognitive abilities, Dan needed assistance with even the most basic needs. His RHP Housing Specialist assisted him with shopping and getting settled into an emergency homeless shelter. Once at the shelter, Dan began searching for a job. Although he was eager to secure full-time employment, his seizure disorder kept getting in the way. Upon the recommendation of his RHP Housing Specialist, Dan agreed to apply for social security disability benefits. In the months that followed, Dan began to exhibit symptoms of mental illness and paranoia. He was afraid that the police were following him and became fearful of the staff at the emergency shelter. When Dan received a letter from social security saying that he needed to see a doctor to be evaluated, he decided to withdraw his application for benefits, fearing that if he went for an evaluation, he would be "locked up" in a mental hospital. He continued to look for full-time employment with no success. Dan's RHP Housing Specialist worked together with the shelter staff. As a team, they patiently continued to support Dan and encouraged him to seek help. After nearly 10 months, Dan agreed to see a psychiatrist and get treatment for his mental illness. He became less paranoid and more open with staff. He eventually agreed to re-apply for social security benefits and go through the required medical evaluations. Three months later he was approved for social security and got his first check. He also found a part-time job. With steady income, Dan and his RHP Housing Specialist were able to find a landlord that would agree to rent to a registered sex offender and now Dan is living in his own apartment. Due to his special circumstances, the RHP continued to work with Dan for more than a year in order to get him into permanent housing. Dan continues to do well as of the writing of this report.*

### **Case Study C**

*Ted released from DOC custody in July 2006 with just \$300 total in savings. He temporarily went to a homeless shelter with assistance from his RHP Housing Specialist. While at the shelter, he complained of physically not feeling well. Ted qualified for MassHealth and was able to get an appointment with a doctor. In the meantime a transitional housing unit, co-located at the homeless shelter became available. The transitional housing was subsidized and Ted was able to move into his own room. It was while he was there, that Ted learned he had cancer and would have to undergo a course of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. As he was going through this, Ted's RHP Housing Specialist helped him to apply for a new homeless housing initiative sponsored by the city. Ted qualified for the initiative and received a housing voucher. After his cancer surgery, Ted spent three months in a rehabilitation center. When he was discharged from the rehabilitation center, he was able to move into his own apartment and continue his treatment and recovery at home. Ted continues to live in his apartment and continues his battle with cancer as of the writing of this report.*

### **Conclusion**

*As these case studies illustrate, inmates who are referred to the Reentry Housing Program face multiple challenges to successful reintegration into the community. Resources for these individuals are limited, and not easily obtained. SMOC is proud to be partnering with the DOC in this collaborative effort to prevent homelessness and reduce recidivism. Although the program presents unique challenges, we are committed to its mission. The type of assistance that the RHP provides can mean the difference between someone having a stable place to live or ending up homeless and living on the streets, more likely to re-offend.*