

Barton undertaking needs assessment study

By Kathryn Reed

By mid-2012 Barton Health expects to have completed a needs assessment study that will show its strengths and weaknesses when it comes to reaching actual and potential clients.

All nonprofit hospitals will be required to do these studies every three years as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in the health care reform passed by Congress.



“This assessment will be led by Barton in 2012 and will identify the health issues that should be addressed in the South Lake Tahoe area. Barton plans to identify barriers to access to healthcare services, preventative healthcare needs, modifiable health risks, quality of life issues and overall health status of our community,” Monica Sciuto, spokeswoman for Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Phone interviews, focus groups and working with agencies on the South Shore will enable the health care provider to collect demographic and health data that is required by the feds.

One benefit is the quantitative data will allow Barton to know where it should focus efforts with programs and money.

A consultant will be hired to do the study to keep any biases out of the data collection.

“I foresee an increase in wellness programs for our community. The idea is to keep people out of the hospital. I know it’s

confusing to people to say that,” Sciuto said. “The new health care model is focused on keeping people healthy.”

Keeping them healthy also keeps them out of the emergency room – which comes with a higher price tag for all involved.

Part of the assessment will also include determining what Barton can afford to provide. A small population does not allow all the specialists to be hired that a metropolitan area can employ.

The study, though, will also focus on specific needs to the South Shore.

“We keep seeing some of the same people come through our emergency department,” Sciuto said. “We need to talk to the police force, CASA, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, public health to see what are they seeing so we circle around in a real way and address their issues.”