



Tahoe Forest Commitment to Breast Cancer Awareness Month

In 2023, Tahoe Forest Health System (TFHS) adopted a new strategic peak centered on community. The new Community Peak aspires “to be an integrated partner in an exceptionally healthy and thriving community”. One of the ways TFHS will be monitoring Community Peak progress is by tracking and improving mammography rates.

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month, this article will highlight why mammography was identified as a key indicator for the new peak and current resources available to support routine and diagnostic mammography.

The Importance of Preventive Screenings

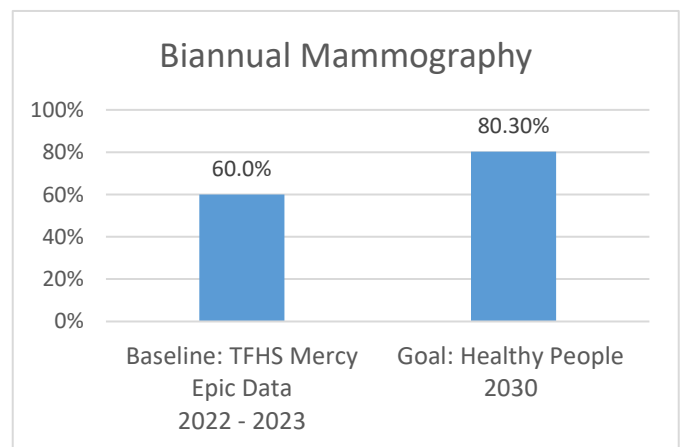
TFHS Community Health Needs Assessments have shown that preventive screenings, including mammography, have room for improvement within our community.

Preventive screenings are important because they help detect health conditions early when they are easier to treat and manage. Mammograms help detect breast cancer early. The American Cancer Society and TFHS recommend annual mammograms for people assigned female at birth beginning at age 40 for those at average risk for breast cancer. Mammograms may begin earlier and are dependent on personal risk. For this reason, it is important to speak with your primary care provider about the best plan for you.

Mammography Data

To better understand our local patient needs specific to breast cancer detection, TFHS analyzed mammography rates of our primary care patients. The analysis showed that only 60% of women aged 40-74 had at least one mammogram between 2022 and 2023. National mammography rates, for comparison, were 75.6% in 2021.

As part of the Community Peak, TFHS aligned with Healthy People 2030 for mammography benchmarking. Healthy People 2030 is a set of data-driven national objectives to improve health and well-being over the next



decade. The Healthy People 2030 Goalⁱ for biannual mammography is 80.3% indicating potential for progress.

The good news is TFHS has multiple teams collaborating to improve mammography rates. Here are a few of the TFHS teams making significant strides to improve access:

- **Community Health:** Our Community Health department supports outreach and education to increase awareness about an array of preventative screenings, including mammography. Community Health Advocates/Promotores support patients experiencing barriers, ensuring they receive the necessary screenings and linkage to care. For more information or to contact an Advocate/Promotor, call (530) 550-6701.
- **Briner/Radiology and IVCH Foundation:** Mammography services have been available at Tahoe Forest Hospital in Truckee for many years and recently expanded into Incline Village Community Hospital (IVCH) thanks to support from the IVCH Foundation, Helmsley Grant and local donors. Mammograms can be scheduled* for either location by calling (530) 582-6510. (**A medical provider order is not required to schedule a mammogram.*)
- **Financial Counseling:** Financial Counselors support any patient experiencing financial hardship in accessing mammography services. They will assist patients in identifying alternative payor sources and support linkages to Every Woman Counts or Safeway Grant funding.
 - **Every Women Counts** provides free breast and cervical cancer screening and diagnostic services to those who qualify. Qualification is based on income and number of people living in the household. Patients may qualify for free services if they live in California and:
 - are a woman 40 years old or older, they may qualify for routine breast cancer screenings, or
 - have symptoms at any age, regardless of gender, they may qualify for breast diagnostic services.
 - **Safeway Grant** funds are managed by the TFHS Foundation and support community members without health insurance in accessing mammography and diagnostic breast health services. Safeway Grant funding can cover up to \$5,000 of eligible services regardless of gender.

For eligibility details or to speak with a Financial Counselor about financial options, contact (530) 582-6458 or FinancialCounselors@tfhd.com.

Breast Care Performance Improvement Moment is an interdisciplinary team facilitated by the Director of Diagnostic Imaging to help work through barriers seen in mammography services such as next available appointment, workflows and communication pathways. With many stakeholders in the room, the team has efficiently resolved issues based on patient and provider feedback such as expanding the use of grant dollars and financial resources to support community mammography.

In conclusion, mammography is a significant community health need and collectively we can reach the Healthy People 2030 goal. We encourage you to take action!

- 1) Reach out to any of the services highlighted above for more information or support in accessing mammography services.
- 2) Schedule an appointment with your primary care provider by calling (530) 582-6205 to talk about your personal risk.
- 3) Attend an upcoming FREE discussion with Radiologist James Schlund, MD and OB/GYN Cara Streit, MD, *Women's Health and Breast Screening Recommendations*. To register, contact the Center for Health at 530-587-3769 or centerforhealth@tfhd.com.
 - a. October 3rd 5:15 – 6:30 Incline Village Community Hospital 880 Alder Avenue Incline Village, NV
 - b. October 7th 5:15 – 6:30 Tahoe Forest Center for Health 10833 Donner Pass Road Suite 102 Truckee, CA

Author Lizzy Henasey, MPH has served on the TFHS Cancer Committee since 2016 and works in Population Health within the Community Health Department.

ⁱ Healthy People 2030 – Breast Cancer Screening; <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/cancer/increase-proportion-females-who-get-screened-breast-cancer-c-05> (*Note the HP2030 goal applies to females aged 50-74. TFHS Mercy Epic Data for 2022 – 2023 for ages 50-74 is 61%. TFHS recommends annual breast screening beginning at age 40.)