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# Mental Health Matters with Carolyn Reinach Wolf: An Interview with Dr. Elizabeth Eckhardt

## FEATURED ATTORNEY

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**Carolyn Reinach Wolf**

Executive Partner

In this insightful episode of **Mental Health Matters** with [Carolyn Reinach Wolf](#), Carolyn interviews [Dr. Elizabeth Eckhardt](#), Director of the Nassau County Bar Association’s Lawyer Assistance Program, to explore the intersection of mental health and the legal profession. Dr. Eckhardt shares her extensive experience assisting attorneys, law students, and their families facing mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and workplace stress.

Together, they discuss collaborative approaches, including case studies highlighting interventions like mental health warrants, home interventions, and confidential therapeutic support. Emphasizing proactive care, Carolyn and Dr. Eckhardt stress early intervention’s critical role in achieving better outcomes for individuals and families. Their conversation underscores the importance of specialized mental health practices like Abrams Fensterman’s [Mental Health Law Practice](#) group, which uniquely integrates legal expertise with comprehensive mental health services.

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**Carolyn:** *Dr. Eckert, can you tell us about your background and your role at the Nassau County Bar Association’s Lawyer Assistance Program?*

**Dr. Eckhardt:** Absolutely, Carolyn. I’ve been the Director of the Nassau County Bar Association’s Lawyer Assistance Program for about nine years. I’m a licensed mental health professional, and my role involves providing confidential support to attorneys, law students, and judges dealing with stress, anxiety, substance use, and other mental health challenges. I

also offer education and outreach, such as suicide prevention and wellness programs, as well as short-term counseling sessions to assess needs and connect individuals to the right resources.

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**Carolyn:** *Can you share a specific case where you worked with an attorney experiencing mental health challenges?*

**Dr. Eckhardt:** Certainly. One case that stands out involved a 45-year-old solo practitioner overwhelmed by depression and anxiety. His workload had become unmanageable, and he was afraid to stop taking new clients due to financial fears. He started making mistakes, missing deadlines, and feared for his license. We worked together with his psychiatrist and a committee member to evaluate his mental health needs, organize his caseload, and establish boundaries. This collaborative effort helped him regain control and address his challenges effectively.

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**Carolyn:** *What tools or interventions do you use when addressing urgent mental health crises in families or individuals?*

**Dr. Eckhardt:** In cases of urgent crises, I often consult with professionals like you, Carolyn, to discuss options such as mental health warrants or in-home interventions. For example, if a family member is rapidly deteriorating, we might arrange a team intervention, including clinicians and legal experts, to provide support and avoid the need for 911 involvement. It's about creating a tailored approach that prioritizes the individual's safety while respecting the family dynamic.

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**Carolyn:** *How do confidentiality laws like HIPAA impact families trying to help their loved ones?*

**Dr. Eckhardt:** HIPAA and state confidentiality laws can be a major source of frustration for families. Once someone turns 18, they have full control over their medical information, even if they are experiencing severe mental health issues. Families often feel excluded from the care process. While practitioners cannot share information, they can listen. I always advise families to document and share relevant histories, such as prior diagnoses or medication reactions, to ensure providers have a complete picture.

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**Carolyn:** *Why is early intervention so critical in addressing mental health issues?*

**Dr. Eckhardt:** Early intervention often leads to better outcomes because it reduces the severity and duration of mental health crises. Families who recognize early warning signs—such as behavioral changes or withdrawal—can seek help before the situation

escalates. Education is key here; it helps individuals and their loved ones identify patterns and intervene sooner. Proactive care not only improves recovery but also strengthens relationships and support systems.

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Listen to the full interview and episode of **Mental Health Matters** below.

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# Mental Health Matters

Hosted By:  
**Carolyn Reinach Wolf**  
EXECUTIVE PARTNER

Joined By:  
**Dr. Elizabeth Eckhardt,**  
LCSW, PhD  
LAP DIRECTOR, NASSAU COUNTY  
BAR ASSOCIATION

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