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[www.merlijngroep.nl](http://www.merlijngroep.nl)

*Merlijn*

**Two-day Basic Training  
for Confidential  
Advisors**



## Two-day basis training for confidential advisors

In their work, people can encounter a wide range of stress-inducing circumstances. This can even lead to them falling ill. Naturally, this is very detrimental to these individuals, to their work, and to the organization they work for. Confidential advisors play an important role in giving people the opportunity to return to their own strength at work. This is also invaluable to the organization.

Being a confidential advisor is a profession, a challenging and difficult one. It's not something you just do; you really have to learn it. It involves not only soft skills, such as empathy and willingness to listen, but also knowledge and techniques that the confidential advisor must learn to master. The specialists at Merlijn ensure that the training is constantly updated and supplemented with the latest insights and corresponding techniques.

Merlijn has been providing training for almost 30 years. As specialists in conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict prevention, we are naturally particularly interested in the work of the confidential advisor. That is why the decision to start offering training for confidential advisors a number of years ago was a logical step for us. We now offer an accredited basic training for those who want to become certified confidential advisors, a two-day training specifically aimed at internal confidential advisors when certification is not deemed necessary, and a number of advanced training courses. All training courses are offered both live and online. This allows us to quickly switch between online and live training depending on your needs. And both in Dutch and in English. We are steadily expanding our range of (advanced) training courses. Not only in the field of undesirable behavior, but also in the field of integrity.

We are also active in deploying external confidential advisors, complaints committees for undesirable behavior, investigating complaints, and advising organizations in this important area. For more information, please see our General Brochure.

The world of the confidential advisor is currently undergoing significant changes, and naturally, our activities are evolving along with it. We are forward-looking and continuously updating ourselves to give the profession of the confidential advisor the professional content it deserves.

Of course, questions may remain. We appreciate them; please feel free to contact us, and if you wish, we would be happy to see you at one of our information sessions or in a personal introductory meeting.

Karien C.M.A. Bonenkamp, managing director en Mr. drs. Dick H.J. Bonenkamp, founder en director Merlijn Advies Groep



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## Introduction

Many people experience bullying, (sexual) harassment, discrimination, or aggression in their workplace. Unwanted behavior has a significant impact on the work atmosphere and the health of employees. Often, issues regarding unwanted behavior and integrity overlap. They can create tension and conflicts between employees and/or managers. Typically, people are skilled enough to resolve these issues together. However, there are also situations where this is not possible. Sometimes, organizations themselves are not adequately equipped to deal with these situations; it may not be clear how to address such a situation, or where to go for advice or to report it. Or there may be a culture where people simply do not feel safe enough to come forward and speak out. This can perpetuate unwanted situations with potential consequences such as: unhappy and stressed individuals, increased (long-term) absenteeism and staff turnover, loss of revenue, productivity, and innovation capacity, an increased risk profile for the organization, and significant damage to its reputation.

## The Confidential Advisor, Important for Both Employee and Employer

The current work climate in many organizations in the Netherlands is not always perceived as pleasant. Some figures from TNO: In 2013, 1.1 million employees (15%) experienced unwanted behavior from their superiors or colleagues, 1.7 million employees (24%) experienced unwanted behavior from external parties, 2.7 million employees (39%) dealt with high job demands, and 1.3 million employees (19%) felt that their superiors did not pay attention to the well-being of the staff.

This translated into 6 million days of absence due to work pressure, stress, or excessively difficult work, 1.7 million days of absence due to problems with superiors, and 450 thousand days of absence due to problems with colleagues or clients. The average cost of an absence day ranges between 200 and 400 euros. This means that employers alone face damages of 1.8 billion euros due to continued payment of wages during absence.

In addition, newspapers report almost daily on individuals and organizations involved in crossing boundaries, unethical behavior, and its consequences. This results in high fines, ranging from a few hundred thousand to several million euros. Per organization, that is. In addition to fines, organizations also face material and immaterial damage: investigation costs, interruptions in business operations, legal fees, loss of reputation, loss of quality, and loss of employee engagement. In short, a costly and time-consuming matter.

A confidential advisor can prevent the escalation of conflicts and help increase transparency within the organization. Additionally, a confidential advisor can make a constructive contribution to creating a culture where people feel safe to speak up and hold each other accountable. By appointing a confidential advisor, both managers and employees can be supported with advice and action, and the underlying issues within the organization can be identified more quickly, allowing the organization to take appropriate actions in a timely manner.

According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, it is mandatory to have policies in place regarding the well-being of employees; this can, for example, be achieved by appointing a confidential advisor. It is expected that soon an amendment to the Working Conditions Act will be approved by Parliament, making it mandatory for every organization to have a well-trained confidential advisor.

According to the Civil Code, the employer may not disadvantage the employee as a result of reporting a suspected wrongdoing in good faith and properly.

Under the Whistleblower Protection Act, organizations with more than 50 employees are required to establish arrangements for reporting societal wrongdoings. Here again, the confidential advisor can play a role.

## Training for Confidential Advisors, aimed at internal confidential advisors or as an introduction

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment requires, during inspections, that there is a well-trained confidential advisor in an organization. However, this does not necessarily mean that they must be certified. Especially in organizations where an external confidential advisor is also present, or in smaller organizations, it is often sufficient to attend a shorter training program that does not lead to certification.

Therefore, Merlijn also offers a two-day basic training. This training covers the most important knowledge and skills for a confidential advisor. It is less comprehensive than the four-day training, of course, but it is sufficient to function well in practice.

We want to respond as much as possible to the needs of the participants. Therefore, there are many opportunities to supplement this basic training as needed, for example, by focusing more on practicing skills and/or paying extra attention to integrity. These combination trainings offer the opportunity to learn a lot at an attractive discount.

For those who want to spend more time practicing role-plays, there is, for example, the option to additionally attend the 1-day advanced skills training. More in-depth training in the area of Integrity can be obtained by attending the 1-day or 2-day Integrity training. When booking multiple training sessions at once, we offer an attractive discount.

### Online or live?

Of course, we prefer to conduct our training sessions in person. The interaction between participants, as well as the informal conversations during breaks, add value to the training. However, we are pleased to see that online training sessions work very well in practice. Although it is different from in-person training, participants are very enthusiastic about this format. The online training sessions have the same content as the in-person training sessions.

Because we believe in the power of collaborative learning, we do not use e-learning. Instead, we maximize the interaction between participants and with the trainer.

If you start with an in-person training session and at any point it becomes no longer possible due to government regulations, there is always the option to switch to the online version. Likewise, the reverse is also possible.

It is good to know that in reality, some of the tasks of a confidential advisor can also be conducted over the phone or via video calls, so the online training prepares you excellently for this.

If you still want to experience what it's like to have an in-person conversation, take advantage of our discount for the "Advanced Skills Training". When you register for both training sessions at the same time, you will receive a 10% discount on the combined price.

### Dutch or English

Our training courses are offered in both Dutch and English. The options and content are the same. Our trainers have a good command of the English language to conduct the training in English, but they are generally not native speakers.

### Open enrollment or in-company

All our training courses can also be provided in-company.

Additionally, customized training courses, tailored to the specific characteristics and needs of an organization, can be provided. For an in-company training, after discussing the specific requirements of your organization, a quote will be provided regarding the content, logistics, and location.

### Two-day basic training

During the **two-day basic training**, you will learn the fundamentals of working as a confidential advisor. We will cover topics such as the duties and role of the confidential advisor, their position within the organization, and the legal context in which the confidential advisor operates. Additionally, we will focus on the skills required by a confidential advisor and provide practical exercises. The training will primarily focus on the general framework of working as a confidential advisor and on undesirable behavior (harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, aggression, and discrimination). Brief attention will also be given to integrity issues.

### Expansion Options

Sometimes participants find it desirable to spend more time on certain aspects, such as extra time for practice or more focus on integrity issues. Especially for them, we offer a number of expansion options. When registering for one or more expansion training sessions at the same time, you will receive a 10% combination discount on both the basic training and the expansion.

### Continuing Education and Training

After the basic training, various continuing education and training courses are available. Please refer to the separate brochures for more information.

- Advanced Training Confidential Advisor Integrity (2 days)
- Confidential Advisor and Integrity (1 day)
- Advanced Skills Training Confidential Advisor (1 day)
- Advanced Rights and Obligations in Case of Sick Leave (1 day)
- From Drama Triangle to Compassion Triangle in One Day (1 day)
- Basic Training for Conflict Coaches (6 days)
- Dealing with Emotions and Resistance (1 day)

## Information 2-days Basic Training for Confidential Advisor

### General

During the **two-day basic training**, you will learn the fundamentals of working as a confidential advisor. We will cover topics such as the duties and role of the confidential advisor, their position within the organization, and the legal context in which the confidential advisor operates. Additionally, we will focus on the skills required by a confidential advisor and provide practical exercises. The training will primarily focus on the general framework of working as a confidential advisor and on undesirable behavior (intimidation, sexual harassment, bullying, aggression, and discrimination). Brief attention will also be given to integrity issues.

In this basic training, in addition to providing a theoretical framework, we will also focus on training practical skills.

### Target Audience

The training is aimed at individuals who are currently working or wish to work as internal or external confidential advisors. Participants aim to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfill this role effectively. This includes increasing their understanding of the specific duties of a confidential advisor, enhancing their communication skills, and becoming aware of their position as a confidential advisor within the organization. The training also addresses the various specific challenges that confidential advisors may encounter in relation to their role within the organization.

A minimum of vocational education at the MBO+ level is required to participate in the training.

### Accreditation by the LVV / Certification

Due to its short duration, this training does not meet the requirement of the LVV for registration as a certified confidential advisor.

### Training Content

The training focuses on understanding the role and authority of the confidential advisor, legal knowledge, the position of the confidential advisor within the organization, and the attitude of the confidential advisor. Additionally, there is a focus on practicing relevant communication skills. Participants are invited to articulate, experience, and if necessary, change their assumptions and beliefs about undesirable behaviors and dilemmas in an interactive manner.

The training will involve a mix of theory, practice, experience, and reflection. Participants' own cases can guide the exercises during the training sessions. There is specific attention given to individual learning goals, and participants will reflect on their performance throughout the course.

**Legal Framework:**

- Laws and regulations
- What constitutes undesirable behavior?
- Forms of undesirable behavior
- Rules for confidential advisors
- Complaints procedure
- Documentation

**Communication Skills:**

- Basic communication
- Types of questions
- Conversation techniques: listening, summarizing, and probing
- Drama Triangle
- Rules for giving feedback
- Dealing with emotions
- Transference and countertransference
- Conflict theory
- Personal frame of reference and reflection

**Position within the Organization:**

- Aligning with the client/employer regarding his/her task fulfillment and orientation within the organization
- Positioning their presence and approach within the organization
- Profiling and providing information
- Documentation
- The approach of the confidential advisor must align with existing PSA (Psychosocial Workload) policies and associated complaints procedures.

**Teaching Methods:**

- Experiential exercises
- Practicing with (own) case studies
- Role-playing
- Analyzing and evaluating various films based on learning objectives
- Working in subgroups

**Learning Outcomes**

- After completing the training, you will:
- Have knowledge of the legal framework and relevant laws and regulations.
- Understand the rights, obligations, and powers of a confidential advisor.
- Be able to distinguish between undesirable behavior, employment conflicts, integrity issues, and (suspected) misconduct, along with the associated procedures.
- Understand the similarities and differences in your role when dealing with Undesirable Behavior and Integrity Issues.
- Be able to recognize and identify various forms of undesirable behavior.
- Have insight into the field of operation of the confidential advisor, both internally and externally.
- Know how to handle a (potential) report: you can map out the story of the reporter and act appropriately.
- Have insight into conversation techniques and be able to apply them effectively.
- Be aware of your own pitfalls and be able to deal with the emotional processes associated with the report.
- Be able to build and maintain a relationship with management and the Works Council (OR), advising them on trust issues. Know how, when to refer a person and to whom.

- Have an understanding of integrity and ethical behavior, recognizing that this concept has different meanings in different contexts, and be able to assess it against various criteria of ethical conduct.
- Have knowledge of integrity issues and relevant laws and regulations related to integrity, and be able to apply them in your role as a confidential advisor.
- Have gained insight into how to conduct a conversation with a reporter, focusing on providing emotional support as well as gathering facts regarding suspicions of integrity violations or misconduct.
- Be able to discuss with the reporter whether there is evidence of an integrity violation or suspicion of misconduct.
- Be aware of the possibility of consulting with the reporter about the factors determining the course of action within the available options.
- Be able to inform employees about policies, the role of the integrity advisor, and protocols and procedures related to integrity policies.
- Be able to reflect on your own behavior regarding integrity, be aware of your role model function, and understand that sometimes you need to rely on your own moral compass.

### Prerequisites

The preferred educational level for this training is HBO (higher professional education) level. However, a minimum of MBO+ (secondary vocational education) level is required. Additionally, the candidate's profile is equally important. Therefore, we would like to assess the CV beforehand, and in case of reasonable doubt, we may conduct an initial interview.

### Study Load

The additional study load, besides attendance, is approximately 3 hours, primarily required for reading the syllabus.

### Number of Participants

The training can accommodate a maximum of 10 participants. The minimum number of participants is 3. The group is led by one main trainer. Guest trainers may be brought in for specific topics if necessary.

### Practice

We deliberately choose not to use professional actors during this training. Playing the role of the reporter provides valuable insight into what it all means and therefore adds significant value.

During the training, everyone will experience what it's like to be a confidential advisor through role-playing exercises. Several participants from previous sessions have expressed their desire for more practice. We provide you with this opportunity by offering the 1-day Skills Deepening Training at a reduced rate.

### Program of the Two-day Basic Training for Confidential Advisors

This is an indication of the program. If circumstances require it, we will adjust it.

## Program

### Day 1

#### Morning Program

- 09.30 - 10.00 : Welcome with coffee and tea
- 10.00 - 10.30 : Welcome, explanation of the total program, logistical matters, participants' introduction / identification of learning objectives
- 10.30 - 11.15 : What is undesirable behavior? What are undesirable interactions? What is integrity? What is the impact on the victim and the organization?
- 11.15 - 11.30 : Break
- 11.30 - 12.30 : Role of the confidential advisor, Differences between unwanted conduct and integrity, Attitude
- 12.30 - 13.00 : Confidential advisor within the organization (relationship with other bodies, policies)
- 13.00 - 14.00 : Lunch

#### Afternoon program

- 14.00 - 15.00 : Communicatie
- 15.00 - 15.15 : Break
- 15.15 - 16.30 : Practice
- 16.45 - 17.00 : Debriefing, time for reflection

### Day 2

#### Morning Program

- 09.30 - 10.00 : Welcome with coffee and tea
- 10.00 - 10.15 : Introduction to this day and review of day 1
- 10.15 - 11.00 : What are the solutions? Social map
- 11.05 - 11.15 : Break
- 11.15 - 11.30 : Legal framework
- 11.30 - 12.30 : Practice
- 12.30 - 13.15 : Lunch

#### Afternoon program

- 13.15 - 14.00 : Advice to management, including annual report
- 14.00 - 14.30 : Integrity
- 14.30 - 14.45 : Break
- 14.45 - 16.45 : Practice
- 16.45 - 17.30 : Debriefing, reflection, and Merlijn social gathering

### Preparation and approach to the training

Three weeks before the start of the training, participants will receive the course syllabus and logistical information. It is expected that the syllabus will be read before the training starts.

The training will consist of a mix of information/theory delivery, practice, and reflection. Participants will engage in exercises with each other based on provided case studies. Additionally, attention will be given to the practical situations relevant to each individual participant and their specific learning objectives.

### Duration of the training

The above program provides an overview of the training on a broad scale. The same program applies for the online variant as well.

### Data

The current dates for the training can be found on the website.

### Number of participants

Given the intensive nature of the training and the fact that each participant should have the opportunity to have their questions addressed, we choose to have relatively small groups. The maximum number of participants is 15, and the minimum is 3.

### Participation Certificate

Upon full attendance and active participation, the participant will receive a certificate of attendance.

### Trainers, price, and location

For more information about the trainers, location, and pricing, please refer to our website.

### Confidentiality of the training

Our training sessions frequently include case studies from current professional practice, not only from the trainers but also from the participants. It is evident that maintaining confidentiality and privacy rules is an absolute requirement to ensure safety and feasibility for everyone.

### Follow-up to the training

After the training, various forms of further support are possible, including peer consultation and supervision.

### Certificate of Attendance/Evaluation/Retake

After completing the course, participants will receive a Certificate of Attendance.

### Catch up

Finally, as a professional training provider, Merlijn always considers the situation of the participant. Course components that could not be attended due to illness or other emergencies must be made up in order to be certified, following the LVV requirements. We naturally offer this opportunity free of charge.

## References

Upon request from a prospective participant, recent references will be provided.

## Lifetime guarantee

We offer a lifetime guarantee on this training. This means that participants can contact the trainer for questions on topics covered in the course for their entire life.

## PE-points

This training is accredited by the MfN (Mediatorsfederatie Nederland) and qualifies for 12 MfN PE points.

## Calendar, Duration, and Costs of Follow-Up Training

For a calendar showing the dates, duration, and costs of various (follow-up) training sessions, please contact the secretariat or visit our website.

## Accommodation costs:

We receive a lot of positive feedback about our castle venues, and they are also more cost-effective than most regular training centers.

[Kasteel Kerckebosch  
Nabij Zeist](#)



[Landhuis Oliphant  
Nabij Rotterdam](#)



[Kasteel Heeswijk Nabij  
's-Hertogenbosch](#)



[Kasteel de Vanenburg  
Nabij Putten](#)



[Kasteel Limbricht  
Nabij Sittard](#)



[Chateau Marquette  
Nabij Amsterdam](#)



[Theater Figi  
Nabij Zeist](#)



[Landgoed Huize Bergen  
Nabij 's-Hertogenbosch](#)



[Kasteel Maurik Nabij  
's-Hertogenbosch](#)



What do the accommodation costs include: training location (training room plus any additional sub-rooms), use of learning materials, coffee, tea, biscuits, candy, fruit, soft drinks, lunch, snack, and drinks.

If you wish to stay overnight and/or have dinner, you can contact the respective location. Merlijn has negotiated a discount for participants of our training sessions.

## What else does Merlijn offer in the field of Confidential Advisors?

Merlijn and its affiliated professionals can take a lot of the work around confidential advisors off the hands of organizations. The services we offer include:

### Organization advice and support

- providing well-trained, certified, and experienced external Confidential Advisors for Unwanted Behavior and Integrity
- providing well-trained and experienced members/chairpersons for a complaints committee on Unwanted Behavior
- support in drafting and implementing policies aimed at preventing Unwanted Behavior and promoting a Culture of Integrity
- drafting and implementing a complaints procedure for Unwanted Behavior
- drafting and implementing a whistleblower policy for integrity issues
- coaching managers in dealing with Unwanted Behavior and integrity issues
- consulting with managers on handling integrity issues and the dilemmas involved
- investigating complaints or reports

You can find more information about this in the General Confidential Advisor Brochure.

## Other activities for confidential advisors.

### Learning from each other.

Exchanging experiences with fellow confidential advisors is extremely useful. Merlijn is happy to facilitate this as well. We do this, among other things, by:

### Inter-vision meetings.

Merlijn offers inter-vision meetings under the guidance of experienced coaches in the field of inter-vision. Meetings can be attended in a fixed group. Additionally, Merlijn offers the opportunity to participate in individual inter-vision meetings, which are organized once every two months.

### Coaching and supervision.

Some confidential advisors express a need for personal guidance in the practice of their profession. Further supervision, on-the-job training, and consultation can be provided under mutually agreed conditions.

### Information afternoons and evenings.

These events provide an opportunity for our connections to meet each other, the trainers, and the programs. We exchange practical experiences, ask questions, and discuss the role of the confidential advisor and related topics. Therefore, these meetings are open to all those interested in the role of the confidential advisor, including past participants in our training programs as well as prospective participants. [View the dates here.](#)

## Group-specific follow-up days.

If there is sufficient interest among a group of participants, special follow-up days are organized for that group. The theory is briefly reviewed. Subsequently, after evaluation and exchange of practical experiences and identified dilemmas, participants are given the opportunity to re-enact individual focal points in a role-play. The individual agenda with focal points is evaluated and supplemented.

## (PE / PO) Training Points

Merlijn is accredited as a certifying education and training institute by various organizations including the National Association of Confidential Advisors (LVV), the Mediators Federation Netherlands (MfN), the Dutch Bar Association (NOVA), the Dutch Association of Professional Coaches (NOBCO), SCOOR RMZO the quality mark for Works Council trainers, Interpreters and Translators, the Royal Dutch Association of Civil-law Notaries (KNB), the certification committee SAD (for labor experts), and the Dutch Association of Surgery (NVDH).



## Merlijn Groep

Merlijn Groep is a dynamic and multidisciplinary organization focused on professional communication and conflict resolution, both in business and personal contexts. The affiliated partners at Merlijn Group, together with Merlijn, advocate for the interests of our clients with high ambition and a passion for sustainable and measurable results, fostering respectful and boundary-pushing relationships.

### **We rely on the inherent strengths and creativity of our clients.**

That's why, for decades, we've drawn inspiration from Merlin, the advisor to the legendary King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. Merlin lived his life backward, 'back in time,' enabling him to draw on experiences and wisdom from the future. Merlin didn't use this power to provide others with ready-made advice but instead offered them thoughts and suggestions to better utilize their own wisdom. In this unique way, the advisor Merlin was a master of communication.

We help our clients discover, develop, and apply the specific aspects of their own strength for themselves and their organization. We see it as our duty to make all our knowledge and know-how available to them and to provide them with advice and assistance in their development or current needs.

### **Professionals for professionals.**

Merlijn Group offers a wide range of products including practical training courses and expert support and advice in the areas of the confidential advisor, co-determination, conflict coaching, legal skills, and negotiation. It is Merlijn Group's ambition to consistently deliver demonstrable, distinctive quality, both in terms of our substantive services, our knowledge and professional skills, and in the sustainable application thereof. We continuously strive for excellent results.

In all our services, we are purposeful. Our training courses are part of those services. In them, we always provide opportunities to practice and test acquired insights and skills against real-world scenarios. We have found that we achieve results through honest dialogue, where humor and clarity help to stay sharp and to translate practice situations into daily tasks.

### **Trust.**

We ensure that Merlijn is an organization in which people have complete trust. This applies to both content and relationships. Therefore, we continuously pay attention to customer needs analyses, evaluations, and research, and base the innovation of our products and the growth of our own qualities on them.

## Merlijn Groep: Focus on the customer

