

When communities contract for EMS, it's about making sure we're getting the quality, accountability, and value our residents deserve. The **American Ambulance Association** put together a national guide that outlines what strong EMS contracts should include: clear expectations, fair oversight, and transparency for the public.

Below is a simplified version of the 13 **core principles** from their report, **EMS Structured for Quality**. We've reworded them in plain language to help every resident, official, and partner understand what good EMS contracting looks like and why it matters.

Full report available at: https://ambulance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EMS-Structured-for-Quality_0308_FINAL.pdf

Principle	What It Means
Accountability	EMS providers should be responsible for results—not just showing up but delivering quality service.
Independent Oversight	A neutral group should monitor the contract to make sure expectations are being met.
Community Focus	The EMS system should be built around what the community needs and expects.
Economic Efficiency	Use resources wisely so taxpayers get good value without waste or unnecessary spending.
Smart System Design	Use data to decide where ambulances go, how many are needed, and when they're staffed.
Transparency	Make costs, performance, and decisions visible to the public and local officials.
Outcome-Based Evaluation	Measure success by health outcomes and service reliability—not just response times.
Stability and Sustainability	Make contracts long enough to support investment but flexible enough to improve over time.
Clear Contracts	Spell out clearly what's expected from EMS providers and what happens if they fall short.
Evidence-Based Practices	Provider operational plans feature proven practices and regularly improve based on what works best.
Workforce Development	Get clear on EMS providers' workforce: staff training, fair pay, and long-term career opportunities.
Fair Bidding	Make the contract bidding process open, competitive, and fair for everyone.
Public Engagement	Involve residents and local leaders in shaping and reviewing EMS services.



