

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](https://ambulance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EMS-Structured-for-Quality_0308_FINAL.pdf)

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



