



March 14, 2025

Ambulance and Emergency Medical Services

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Ambulance and Emergency Medical Services	3
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Ambulance and Emergency Medical Services

Reference Number: CTAS-552

In 2021, the Legislature enacted Public Chapter 212, effective April 22, 2021, amending T.C.A. § 7-61-101 et seq.

The Act provides that ambulance service is hereby designated as an essential service in the State of Tennessee.

All county governing bodies are authorized and directed to make provisions to ensure that at least one licensed ambulance service is available within their county. This may be provided as a county service, but can also be accomplished through other means, including, but not limited to:

- providing a license or franchise to a private company;
- contracting with a public, private, or nonprofit entity for the service;
- entering into an interlocal agreement with one or more local governments; or
- entering into an agreement with a hospital or other healthcare facility.

A county is not required to appropriate county revenues for ambulance service if the service can be provided by any other means. T.C.A. § 7-61-102(b).

A county can not provide and maintain, license, franchise, or contract for ambulance service within the boundaries of a municipality that has made provisions for ambulance service without the approval of the municipal governing body of the area to be served. T.C.A. § 7-61-102(d).

The governing body of any county may adopt and enforce reasonable regulations to control the provision of private or nonprofit ambulance service. T.C.A. § 7-61-102(e).

Counties are authorized to provide ambulance service to cities or another county as long as the governing body of that city or county has formalized the arrangement. T.C.A. § 7-61-102(f) states:

(1) Except as provided in subdivision (f)(2), any two (2) or more counties and municipalities may enter into agreements with each other and with persons providing both emergency and non-emergency ambulance service for a county or counties on a countywide basis, for joint or cooperative action to provide for ambulance service as authorized in this chapter.

(2) In any county having a metropolitan form of government and a population in excess of five hundred thousand (500,000), or in any county having a population of not less than eight hundred twenty-five thousand (825,000) nor more than eight hundred thirty thousand (830,000), according to the 1990 federal census or any subsequent federal census, any two (2) or more counties and municipalities may enter into agreements for joint or cooperative action to provide for ambulance service as authorized in this chapter.

Counties are authorized under T.C.A. § 5-16-101(b)(2) to operate emergency medical services and charge fees or rates for such services under the urban type public facilities law.

The Emergency Medical Services Act of 1983, T.C.A. § 68-140-301 et seq., establishes a state emergency medical services board to regulate agencies that provide ambulance and emergency medical services. Although counties are not required to provide ambulance services as a county service (T.C.A. § 68-140-318), they must comply with this act if they choose to provide them. T.C.A. § 68-140-316.

The regulation of EMS services is needed to ensure that an acceptable level of emergency medical service is provided to the citizens of the county. These regulations may include a performance-based contract with penalty provisions for non-compliance, or a determination that it is in the best interest of the county to be the sole provider of ambulance services.

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