

# **Third Party Software Test Plan and Certification Procedures Update**

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FOR THE

**ERISA Filing Acceptance System 2  
(EFAST2)**



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# 1 Overview

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to explain the process that any entity that wishes to produce software for the 5500 series forms must follow for the EFAST2 System to accept the output from this software. This information is written to inform EFAST2 stakeholders of the requirements the Government has placed on prospective third-party software developers that may wish to create their own software to prepare filings for or transmit submissions to the EFAST2 system. It is believed that the majority of filings submitted to the EFAST2 System will come from software designed from third party software vendors. This document details the processes and procedures used to approve third party software. The basic process is as follows:

- Register as a Third Party Software Vendor
- Register company and product information
- Develop software consistent with requirements
- Test software
- Certify software
- Receive acceptance

## 1.2 General Information about Third Party Software

### 1.2.1 Third Party Software Developer

A company, trade, business, or other person applying for authorization to be an EFAST2 Software Developer. A Third Party Software Developer may apply for all the above listed credentials if they also produce and transmit their filings in-house. Or the Third Party Software Developer may produce filing preparation software that will be marketed to stakeholders with the filing submission data structure, format, and validation rules in the XML Schema and Field Mapping and Edit Tests as explicitly defined in the DER (Data Element Requirements)

### 1.2.2 Third Party Stakeholders

Stakeholders may be one or more of the following categories:

- Filers. These include plan administrators, plan sponsors, accountants, fiduciaries, actuaries, and others with an interest in creating EFAST2 filing components.
- Third Party Preparers. These are generally individuals or organizations that provide filing preparation services to filers and may wish to provide software hosting and/or transmission services as part of the EFAST2 filing process.
- Transmitters. These are generally individuals or organizations that offer to transmit electronic filings in bulk for processing on behalf of filers.

## 1.3 Third Party Software Categories

Third party software is divided into two categories: transmission software and filing preparation software. Both of these are developed by third party vendors and may be included in the same software product. Third party vendors have the ability to create in-house or commercial applications to prepare and submit 5500 series forms and schedules to EFAST2. Third party software may provide added value beyond the functionality provided by the EFAST2 IFILE method (Internet-based web portal filing). The URL for PATS Testing will be available on

August 3, 2009 and will be emailed to registered Third Party Vendors. For further information on PATS testing, see Participant Acceptance Testing System (PATS) Package at the designated URL (see Section 5.2).

### 1.3.1 Transmission Software

Transmission software is used to package and transmit completed filings, communicate submission status requests, and communicate filing status requests to EFAST2 via web services protocol and is tested using the PATS available at the designated PATS Testing URL (see above paragraph).

Transmission software certification is not based on the acceptance of the filing, but rather the communication via the web service. Successful transmission requires proper creation of message headers and the Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) envelope. PATS testing for transmission software include installing the software on a test machine and processing all PATS test cases via the vendor's transmission software from the vendor's site. The transmission software functionality included in PATS testing includes:

- Validation of the schema of request messages
- Checks for viruses in binary attachments
- Generation of printable receipts from SendSubmissionResponse
- Generation of printable error reports from EFAST2 exception messages
- Generation of printable acknowledgments from filing status responses
- Documented host requirements
- Transmission of test filings to PATS
- Processing of filing status requests
- Submission of status requests
- Receipt of responses and fault messages
- Invalid *TransmitterID* and *RequesterID* to test the fault message handling within the transmission software

The PATS package will include XML files provided to the vendor for SendSubmission, GetFilingStatus, and GetSubmissionStatus. The vendors are responsible to put these files into their software for transmission. Submit Transmission PATS Cases by calling the web services at the designated URL (see Section 5.2). Vendors can get submission or filing status by calling the web services.

Once certified, transmission software will be authorized to transmit web service requests to the production environment and to transmit PATS test cases to the PATS facility for filing preparation software testing. Notification of certification is provided via the affidavit confirmation screen on the EFAST2 Web Portal. In addition, an email confirmation will be sent to the vendor. Credentials for transmission software are applied to a software package, not the company. Recertification is required for any new release of third party software. Recertification requires issuance of a new *TransmissionSoftwareId* and retesting of the PATS test cases. For further information on Transmitter PATS Testing see Participant Acceptance Testing System (PATS) Package at the designated URL (see Section 5.2).

### 1.3.2 Filing Preparation Software

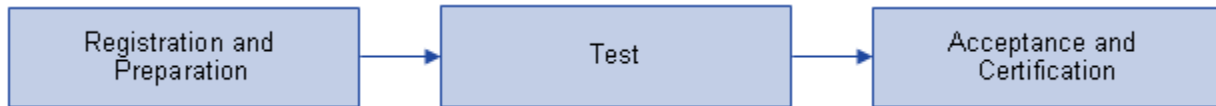
Filing preparation software is used to prepare forms and accompanying schedules into assembled filings. Filing preparation software must reduce the incidence of erroneous filings by implementing business rules, checking attachments, protecting the integrity of electronic signatures, and performing pre-validation of filings. The vast majority of capabilities will be verified based on PATS test cases submitted through the PATS facility by the third party vendor. Other capabilities, such as creation of printable facsimiles, are certified by the third party vendor with the submission of an online affidavit.

Filing preparation software certification is based on the acceptance of all the PATS test cases. The required functionality and features for filing preparation software as part of certification testing includes:

- All EFAST2 schedules shall be included in at least one scenario.
- At least one scenario shall include multiple Schedule As.
- At least one scenario shall be for a large defined benefit plan.
- At least one scenario shall be for a welfare plan.
- At least one scenario shall be a DFE filing.
- At least one scenario shall be for a terminated plan.
- At least one scenario shall include an amended filing.
- At least one scenario shall include an extension.
- At least one scenario shall include an Accountant's Opinion.
- At least one scenario shall include a text (not PDF) attachment.
- At least one scenario shall include a user-defined "OtherAttachment" type.

A *FilingSoftwareId* will be certified once the third party vendor successfully processes all PATS test cases, including the required batches, through the PATS facility and submits an online affidavit. Once certified, the software will be authorized to submit assembled filings to the production environment. Notification of certification is provided via the affidavit confirmation screen on the EFAST2 Web Portal. In addition, an email confirmation will be sent to the vendor. Credentials for filing preparation software are applied to a software package, not the company. Filing preparation software must be certified annually with the latest form versions, as well as following any mid-year changes. A new *FilingSoftwareId* will be issued for each new certification. Filing preparation software must be tested using the PATS facility and certified transmission software. For further information on Filing Preparation Software PATS Testing see Participant Acceptance Testing System (PATS) Package at the designated URL (see Section 5.2). For more information on becoming a Third Party Vendor one would need to submit an application at the website the designated URL (see Section 5.2).

## 2 Third Party Qualification Process



- Register for certification and apply for certification credentials (PIN, Signer IDs and Vendor Code)
- Test third party software
- Submit a third party software affidavit and receive permission to produce 5500 series filings for production

### 2.1 Registration

The first step in applying for credentials on the EFAST2 system, whether it is for a Third Party Vendor or a Stakeholder, is to register on the EFAST2 web portal. Filing participants are required to obtain EFAST2 electronic filing authentication credentials. This registration begins when an applicant provides contact information on the EFAST2 website. The participant will be asked information about their name, address, city, state, zip-code, daytime phone, email, Company name and what user type they wish to sign up for (Filing Author, Filing Signer, Schedule Author, Transmitter or Third Party Software Developer).

For third party software developers, the registration process for obtaining the appropriate credentials is the same regardless of software category. Third party vendor certification is initialized via EFAST2 registration at the designated URL (see Section 5.2). Registering as an EFAST2 user includes selection of one or more roles for a User ID and PIN. Choosing the “Third Party Software Developer” role enables selection of the third party option on the EFAST2 homepage.

Once completed, the registration process generates the appropriate credentials. The credentials are emailed to the user based on information input on the certification request. Included in these credentials are a PIN and Signer ID. The PIN and Signer ID will allow Stakeholders to perform the functions they have requested during the registration process and allow Third Party Software Vendors to receive a Vendor Code and request PATS Certification of their software.

- Credentials from the EFAST2 system that have not been used for 3 (three) consecutive calendar years will expire.
- The expired credential shall remain in the database but be flagged as expired.
- The application for electronic filing participation shall be completed in one session. Incomplete applications will not be saved or stored.
- The system shall make no attempts to verify any of the applicant’s information to ensure that the identity is real or that the applicant is authorized to file/sign the filing.
- An individual or batch transmitter may change the PIN following successful authentication.
- If an individual’s name, PIN, password, secret knowledge, or email address is changed, the credentials database will maintain a record of that change for the duration of the contract.
- When any change is made to a user’s account an email will be sent to the current email on file informing the user.
- In the case where the user changes their email address, the notification will be sent to both the old and new email addresses associated to the account.

From there, information is entered relative to the Third Party Company, software package, and contact information. A TransmissionSoftwareId, FilingSoftwareId, or both can be requested for a software package. The TransmissionSoftwareId is required to be certified first to allow communication between the Third Party Vendor's system and the EFAST2 PATS Certification System.

For more complete registration for Third Party Vendor instruction see PATS Procedures and Certification Criteria.

### 2.1.1 Privacy Statement

The first step of the registration process is to accept the Privacy Statement on the EFAST2 web portal. If this privacy statement is not accepted, then all registration will cease. The following is the Privacy Statement that must be accepted before continuing in the registration process:

Thank you for visiting the Department of Labor (DOL) Web site and reviewing our privacy and security statement. DOL is strongly committed to maintaining the privacy of your personal information and the security of DOL computer systems. With respect to the collection, use and disclosure of personal information, DOL makes every effort to ensure compliance with applicable federal law, including, but not limited to, [The Privacy Act of 1974](#), [The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995](#), and [The Freedom of Information Act](#).

As a general rule, DOL does not collect personally-identifying information about you when you visit the EFAST2 Web Portal, unless you choose to provide such information to us. The information we receive depends upon what you do when visiting the site.

***If you respond to an online request for personal information:***

Generally, DOL will use the information requested to respond to your inquiry or to provide you with the service associated with the request. However, when we request this information, we fully describe in a customized "Privacy Notice" the reasons for collecting it and DOL's intended use of the information. This Privacy Notice will either appear on the EFAST2 Web Portal or be accessible through a link prominently displayed immediately preceding the information request.

***If you visit our site to read or download information:***

We collect and store the following information:

- The name of the domain from which you access the Internet (for example, dol.gov, if you are connecting from DOL's computer account).
- The date and time you access the EFAST2 Web Portal.
- The Internet address of the Web site from which you linked directly to the EFAST2 Web Portal.

The above information is used by software programs on the EFAST2 Web Portal to create summary statistics which allow us to assess the number of visitors to the different sections of our site, identify what information is of most and least interest, determine technical design specifications, monitor system performance, and help us make the EFAST2 Web Portal more useful to visitors.

***If you identify yourself by sending an email containing personal information:***

Information collected in these instances is used solely for responding to requests for information or records. For example, you may decide to send us personally-identifying information, such as your mailing address in an electronic mail message requesting that information be mailed to you. We may forward your email to other employees at other Government agencies (e.g., Treasury Department/IRS, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation) who are better able to respond to you.

Should you wish to file a request under FOIA, instructions are provided at:  
<http://www.dol.gov/dol/foia/main.htm>

***If you link to other sites outside DOL:***

The EFAST2 Web Portal has many links to other sites. When you link to any of these sites, you are no longer on the EFAST2 Web Portal and are subject to the privacy policy of the new site.

***Cookie Use Notice***

DOL employs "cookies" to provide better service to its customers. DOL does not use cookies to collect any personally-identifying information from users or to track user activities beyond the EFAST2 Web Portal. DOL does not maintain copies of cookies on the EFAST2 Web Portal after you leave the web portal.

Cookies are small pieces of temporary data that are exchanged between a web site and a user's computer which enable a "session," or "dialog," to be established between the two machines. With the session established, DOL is able to tailor its responses (i.e., identify and provide you with the information you want) and help you use the EFAST2 Web Portal in the most efficient and effective manner possible. When DOL's server does not receive further requests from your computer or you simply exit your browser, the session will be terminated

DOL limits its use of cookies to "session cookies" - types of cookies that are temporarily stored in your computer's memory. Session cookies are normally deleted from a user's computer when the user logs off the computer or the user exits the browser. Effective January, 2001, DOL stopped issuing "persistent cookies" - types of cookies that could be stored permanently on your workstation and reused each time you visit DOL's EFAST2 Web Portal.

The EFAST2 Web Portal employs software programs for security purposes and to ensure that this service remains available to all users. This software monitors network traffic to identify unauthorized attempts to upload or change information, or to block traffic that might otherwise cause damage.

Unauthorized attempts to upload information or change information on this service are strictly prohibited and may be punishable under the [Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986](#) and [The National Information Infrastructure Protection Act of 1996](#).

**2.1.2 Profile Screen**

The next step in the process is to fill out information about the person and company that is applying for these credentials. The applicant must fill out the Profile Screen. After entering the profile information the applicant will need to decide what tasks they wish to apply for. The tasks are Filing Author, Filing Signer, Schedule Author, Transmitter and/or Third Party Software Developer.

**Register - Profile Information**

Please enter your profile information and select Next to continue. Fields marked with an "\*" are required.

\* First Name:

\* Last Name:

\* Address:

Address 2:

\* City/Town:

- \* Country:
- \* State:
- \* Province:
- \* ZIP:
- \* Postal Code:
- \* Daytime Phone:
- Fax:
- \* Email:
- \* Company Name:

**Filing Author**

The person who initiates the filing and will be responsible for submitting the filing to the system. This user type has no signature authority.

**Filing Signer:**

This user type provides signature authority only.

**Schedule Author:**

A person who has been asked, by the Filing Author, to complete one of the Schedules for the filing. This user type cannot initiate, sign or submit a filing.

**Transmitter**

A company, trade, business, or other person applying to be an EFAST2 Transmitter to transmit Series Form 5500. The Transmitter role is the individual that actually submits (transmits) the filing to the EFAST2 system for processing. All users of transmission software will be required to register as a transmitter.

**Third Party Software Developer**

A company, trade, business, or other person applying for authorization to be an EFAST2 Software Developer. Third Party Software Developers produce filing preparation and / or transmission software for internal use or for commercial distribution. Selecting this option triggers availability of the Third Party Developer components of the web portal. A Third Party Software Developer may also apply for all the above listed credentials if they also produce and transmit their filings in-house.

**2.1.3 Challenge Information**

The next step in registration process is for the applicant to pick a Challenge Question. This question provides a level of security for the applicant so an outside entity will not have the ability to access their account. Submit the Challenge Question and then move on to the next screen.

**2.1.4 Summary Screen**

The Summary Screen lists the information the applicant has entered into the EFAST 2 system for registration purposes. The applicant will need to verify that the information entered is correct. If not correct tab to the Edit button and correct the information. It is very important that the applicant verifies that all information is correct especially the email address. The email address is used to communicate with the applicant the next step of the EFAST 2 registration process to attain their PIN and User ID.

### 2.1.5 Email Confirmation and Approval

Upon completion and acceptance of the registration process by the EFAST2 System an email will be generated with information on how to obtain the registrars PIN and Signer ID. Follow the instructions on the email to retrieve the PIN and Signer ID information. This is the final step in the process for anyone that has requested to be a Filing Author, Filing Signer, Schedule Author and a Transmitter. The email you will receive follows.

Dear [Your Name Here],

You may now retrieve your PIN and UserID. For your security, you must go to the link below to retrieve these credentials from our secure server. Either select the link or copy the entire link and paste it into the address or location line of your Web browser. Make sure you copy and paste the entire link; it may appear on multiple lines.

*[The website link will be provided here.]*

If you are an AOL user, click here:

*[The website link will be provided here for AOL users].*

Please Note: Your PIN is available at the above web portal until [mm/dd/yyyy]  
(This is a three month window to allow access to this information).

If this date has already passed, please contact the EFAST2 Contact Center at 1-866-463-3278.

For your security, you can view your PIN only once using the link above. You should either print the page on which your PIN is displayed or write your PIN down.

As part of the PIN application, you agreed not to disclose or share your PIN with anyone, including commercial service providers. You also agreed to keep your PIN in a safe location.

If your PIN is misplaced or stolen, either go to the EFAST2 web portal and change your PIN or contact the EFAST2 Contact Center at 1-866-463-3278.

If you encounter any problems retrieving your PIN, you can contact the EFAST2 Contact Center for assistance.

Thank you,

U.S. Department of Labor

## 2.2 Applying for PATS Testing –

For more detailed information see the PATS Application section (28.1) of the Participant Acceptance Testing System (PATS) Package.

## Step 1

### Home Filing Summary –

1. Go to the designated URL (see Section 5.2).
2. Log into EFAST2 Third Party Vendor Link.  
The Home Filing Summary Page will be presented.  
This page provides a summary view of the options available to registered Third Party vendors.
3. Select the *Certify Software* link under Third Party Software category on the right side of the interface.  
This will take you to the Third Party Software Summary page for registration of your company and software.

## Step 2

### Third Party Software Summary – Registering a company and software for PATS Test certification

1. Click on Add Company button (at the lower left of the screen).
2. Follow the instructions on the screen to register the company and software.  
After entering the company name and software information, the grid on the page will display the Software ID (Vendor Code). If the software has already been registered (initially, all software will need to be registered) the company or product information may be edited and updated as needed.

## Step 3

### Add a Company – Registering a company and/or make changes to existing information

1. Fill out the fields.  
The fields marked with asterisks are required fields. This information must be entered before a company will be registered.
2. Click Next to continue to the Add a Product screen.

## Step 4

### Create Product - Add Product – Registering software products as Transmission Software or Filing Preparation Software.

1. Follow screen instructions to register each software product and version so that each receives its own Software ID.  
Register Transmission software separately from Filing Preparation software. Multiple software products for each company may be registered for certification. If your product functions as both transmission software and filing preparation software, you must add your product once as transmission software and once as filing preparation software.
2. Each software product **must** pass the associated PATS Test Certification.
3. Click Submit to save the product information.

## Step 5

### Successfully Adding a Product – Adding Transmission and/or Filing Preparation Software.

1. After successfully registering a company or product, a light blue box will appear that confirms the software has been saved.
2. Add Next Product if you wish to enter another software product or the same product as another type.
3. Click Cancel to return to the Third Party Software Summary screen.

## Step 6

### Transmission ID/Software ID

1. On the right side of the Third Party Software Summary page (under Software ID), the vendor code for the product is listed. If you registered the same package as both transmission and filing preparation software, you will see each listed separately.
2. The Transmission Software ID (vendor Code) needs to be entered into the submission header for security and tracking purposes.
3. The Filing Preparation Software Id (vendor code) will need to be entered into the filing header for security and tracking purposes.
4. The application process is now complete and you may begin the PATS certification process.

## 3 Software Requirements

### 3.1 Software Characteristics

Third party software developers have the ability to create in-house or commercial applications that prepare and/or submit 5500 series forms and schedules to EFAST2. Third party software is divided into two categories: filing transmission software and filing preparation software. Both can be included in a single software product. Before software can be used, it must be validated and authorized by the Department of Labor. Validation of third party software is performed in strict accordance with DOL published schemas and communication protocols. Credentials are required for both filing transmission and filing preparation software and are applied to the software package, not the company.

#### 3.1.1. Filing Transmission Software

Filing transmission software is used to transmit completed filings, submission status requests, and filing status requests to EFAST2 via web services protocol. The Transmission Software PATS Test Cases must be submitted and approved prior to any submitting of Filing Preparation Software PATS Test Cases.

For the outline of the complete Transmission Certification Process see Appendix A.

#### 3.1.2. Filing Preparation Software

Filing preparation software is used to prepare forms and schedules and assemble them into filings. Vendors are required to perform validations in strict accordance with DOL published schemas and communication protocols for filing preparation software. Filing preparation software needs to reduce the incident of non-accepted filings by implementing business rules, checking attachments, protecting the integrity of electronic signatures, and performing pre-validation of filings.

Publications – Additional information is available in the following publications are located at the website the designated URL (see Section 5.2).

- Software Developer Specification
- PATS Procedures and Certification Criteria
- PATS Application
- Data Element Requirements (DER)

For the outline of the complete Filing Preparation Certification Process see Appendix A.

## 4 Required Testing

PATS test cases will be used to test third party software. Transmission software and filing preparation software each have their own set of PATS test cases. This testing ensures that third party software meets all the requirements for creating and transmitting ERISA filings prior to allowing the software to submit filings to EFAST2 production system. The PATS test cases have been developed to test for the most common errors as well as the ability of the third party software to accept and process messages returned by the EFAST2 system. Third party software developers who wish to provide value-added applications that are capable of creating and submitting Form 5500 and accompanying schedules to EFAST2 production system are required to test their software with the EFAST2 PATS test cases.

### 4.1 Obtaining PATS Test Cases

These PATS Test Cases are located at the website (at the designated URL - see Section 5.2) in a document titled *Participant Acceptance Testing System Package (PATS)*. The PATS Cases are also made available to vendors at the Third Party Software Developers Conference each year.

Transmission software test cases are in the form of completed filings in XML format. They are to be packaged by the transmission software and sent to the PATS for processing. If the third party software does not have the capability to import XML from an external source but is capable of creating filings, the test filings may be created with that software, provided the resulting XML exactly and precisely matches that in the PATS test cases.

The transmission software test verifies all three EFAST2 web service operations (*SendSubmission*, *GetSubmissionStatus*, and *GetFilingStatus*) and requires proper creation of message headers and the Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) envelope.

Filing preparation software test cases are defined by a list of forms, schedules, and attachments. Test case criteria provide the information needed to prepare the appropriate forms and schedules, however, computations and data for all lines are not provided. Knowledge of ERISA and Form 5500 preparation is necessary as the filings must be prepared and computed correctly before transmitting to the PATS facility. PATS test cases for filing preparation software are in the form of a PDF file containing the filing scenarios that must be created and submitted to the PATS facility.

The filing preparation software test verifies schema-valid filing data filings are free of edit test errors, include the correct values of filing header elements (including *FilingId*, timestamps, form year, and signature elements). It also verifies that the implementation of attachments (including population of *AttachmentId*, handling of both text and PDF attachments, and base64Binary encoding of text and PDF attachments) is correct.

The following scenarios are included in the PATS test cases for filing preparation software:

- All EFAST2 schedules included in a single test case
- Multiple Schedule As
- Large defined benefit plan filing
- Welfare plan filing
- DFE filing
- Terminated plan filing
- Amended filing
- Extension filing
- Accountant's Opinion attachment
- Text (non-PDF) attachment
- User-defined "Other Attachment"

Data formats in the filing preparation PATS test cases contain differences from the values and formats allowed by the EFAST2 schemas in order to comprehensively test the software provider's ability to understand the schemas and to detect and correct invalid values entered by filers.

## 4.2 Submitting PATS Test Cases

The PATS test cases submission process will be implemented in such a way as to provide the same functionality to the third party vendors during testing as they would encounter during production submission and filing processing. To submit PATS Test filings for certification vendors need to set the test indicator value to 1 in the RequestHeader. Detailed guidance for using the web services for PATS test cases will be found in the following documents:

- PATS Procedures and Certification.
- PATS Test Filings. These can be viewed in the document titled PATS Test Filings.
- The Software Developer Specification

Separate test cases exist for Transmission Software and Filing Preparation Software. Transmission Software PATS test cases are submitted independently.

Filing Preparation Software cases must be submitted using previously certified Transmission Software. A vendor may submit the PATS case filings as many times as needed until the test is successful.

Once the respective PATS cases have been reviewed and accepted by the PATS team, the vendor will be notified that they need to submit their final submissions.

For Transmission Software, you must resend PATS cases 1, 2, and 3. Cases 4 and 5 are used to test your ability to process errors returned by EFAST and do NOT have to be sent as part of the final submission.

For Filing Preparation Software, you must package the 11 PATS cases into 2 batches. The first batch will consist of PATS cases 1-5 and the second batch will consist of PATS cases 6-11. The 2 batches must be submitted on the same day and contain no errors.

Once the final submissions have been received and approved by the PATS team, the EFAST2 system will send an email requesting that the vendor return to the EFAST2 System to completed and submit the online Affidavit. Once the Affidavit is agreed to and submitted, the EFAST2 System will send an email stating that the software product has been approved for production and the Production System will accept filings with the respective software ID. The vendor should retain a copy of the email as verification that they have been certified to use the EFAST2 system.

More information on PATS Test Case submission can be found in the PATS Procedures and Certification Criteria.

## 4.3 Certification

When ALL PATS cases have been reviewed and approved by the Government's certification team, the status of the respective software id will be changed to "Pending Affidavit." An email will be sent prompting the third party vendor to return to the EFAST2 portal to complete the affidavit in order to change the status of the respective software ID to "Certified." Following receipt of the affidavit, the status of the *FilingSoftwareID* is set to "Certified."

For the first year of the EFAST2 system, the registration process for Third Party Software vendors from August 3, 2009, through January 1, 2010, will be different. The Third Party Software vendors must pre-register with the EFAST2 Contact Center at 1-866-GO-EFAST. This is the only way that vendors will receive credentials for certification prior to January 1, 2010. After January 1, 2010, this process will no longer be in place; registrations will be processed online at [www.efast.dol.gov](http://www.efast.dol.gov). Filing Preparation Software vendors who wish to participate in PATS testing prior to January 1, 2010, will be able to use Filing Transmission Software in a "Pending Affidavit"

state. However, certifications will not be complete until the affidavits are signed on or after January 1, 2010 on the EFAST2 website.

Any filing submitted to the EFAST2 production system using a Vendor Code that has a test status will be rejected and will not be processed. Before the software is released for production, the Vendor is required to have completed and signed the affidavit for the software Id. An email will also be sent to the email address associated with the registered user.

#### 4.4 Vendor Testing Requirements

The following testing must be performed by the vendor at their site and confirmed using the online affidavit on the EFAST2 portal:

- Filer access to official Government filer instructions for Form 5500 series filings
- Filer access to most recent version of Government-approved EFAST2 schemas, edit tests, and error codes
- Schema validation of individual forms and schedules as well as assembled filings
- Virus checking of binary attachments
- Validation of assembled filings using EFAST2 edit tests, reporting Government-specified error information
- Calculation of bypass codes as part of edit tests validation
- Creation of printable facsimiles of all forms, schedules, and attachments consistent with the official Government forms
- Documentation of required host environment and verification that all prerequisites exist at time of filing preparation software installation
- Integrity of electronic signature
- Valid XML filing data
- Verification the filing header information is systematically populated by the third party software and is not directly editable by filers
- Verification the filing header information is systematically populated each time an assembled filing is signed
- Generation of correct timestamps in the filing header

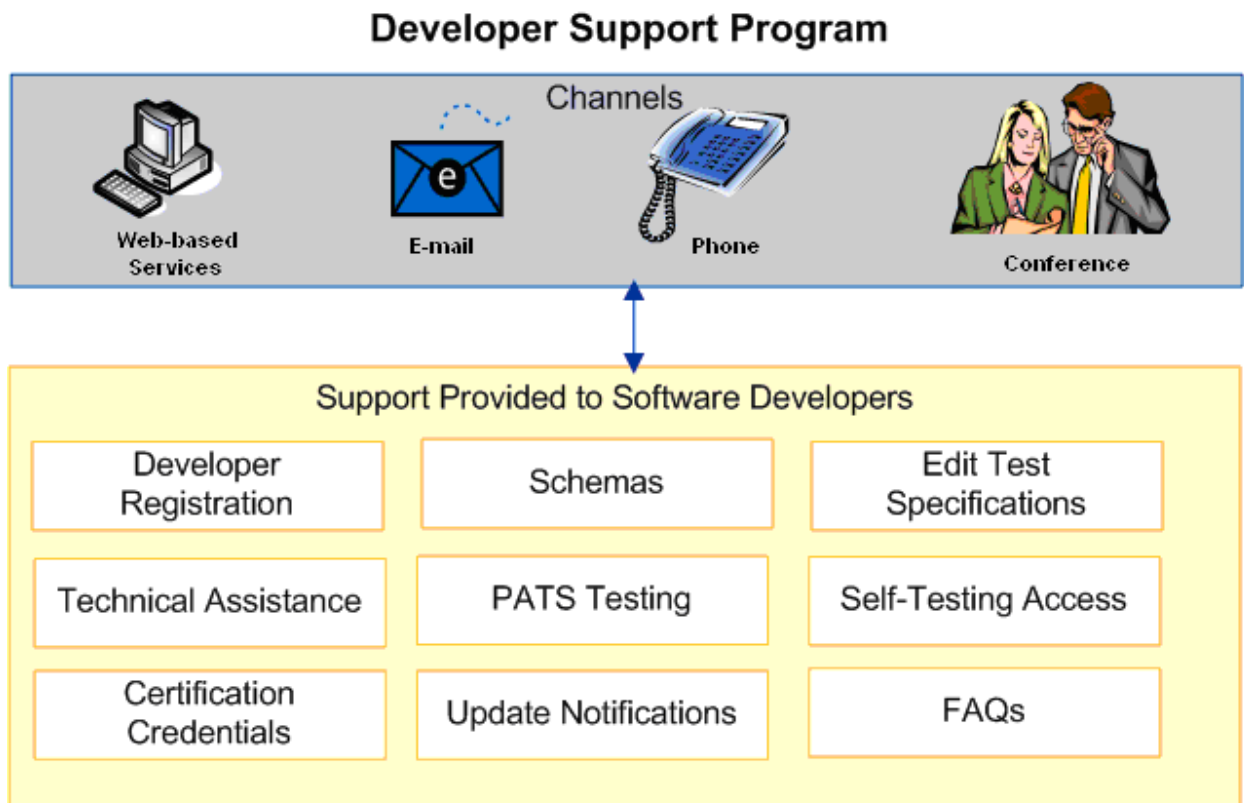
#### 4.5 Acceptance

An email will be sent to the vendor and the Government's certification team as notification of the certified status. A *software ID* is certified once a third party vendor successfully processes all PATS test cases through PATS, including the required batches, and submits the online affidavit.

A *FilingSoftwareID* is only valid for a specific form year. Once certified, the software is authorized to submit assembled filings to the production environment. Notification of certification is provided via the affidavit confirmation screen on the EFAST2 web portal. Filing preparation software must be certified annually with the latest form versions, as well as following any mid-year changes or new release of the software. A new *software ID* is issued for each new certification. EFAST2 maintains a valid *software Id* database for each form year and use it to authenticate filing submissions to EFAST2.

## 5 Troubleshooting and Support

Numerous communication channels are available to Stakeholders and Third Party Software Vendors for EFAST2 support as depicted in the following diagram.



## 5.1 Web Forms, Email, and Phone

Channels available for third party vendor support include online forms, email, and phone in addition to the documentation located on the EFAST2 website. Support includes assistance with developer registration, certification credentials, schemas, edit test specifications, technical issues, PATS access, and PATS testing. Contact Center representatives will assist vendors in answering questions and resolving issues pertaining to a vendor's release of software to the general public. Hours of operation for live customer service are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, except for federal holidays. Email and web-form requests can be submitted at anytime with an anticipated response time of no more than two days.

In addition to the above, EFAST2 will, from time to time, plan and deliver outbound email initiatives in which stakeholders will receive email notifications with important and relevant updates. Outbound emails will provide a URL for web self-assistance and a telephone number for customer support.

## 5.2 Contacts

Web Form: [www.efast.dol.gov](http://www.efast.dol.gov) (available on January 1, 2010)

Email: [efast@dol.gov](mailto:efast@dol.gov)

Live Customer Service: 1-866-463-3278 or 1-866-GO-EFAST

Endpoint for Submitting PATS test cases: <https://endpoint.efast.dol>

## Appendix A – Steps for EFAST2 Third Party Software Certification

The following describes the required steps for EFAST2 Third Party Software Certification.

1. Register as a vendor. (See PATS Application document available at designated endpoint (see section 5.2)). A Software ID will be provided as part of the registration process.
2. Download PATS package (See PATS Test Cases document available at designated endpoint (see section 5.2)).
  - a. PATS Test Cases
    - (1) Transmitter PATS Cases
    - (2) Filing Preparation Software PATS Cases
  - b. Government Instructions
  - c. Data Element Requirement (See XML DER Volumes 1 & 2 available at designated endpoint (see section 5.2)).
3. Transmission Software Certification  
These PATS package will include XML files provided to the vendor for SendSubmission, GetFilingStatus, and GetSubmissionStatus. The vendors are responsible to put these files into their software for transmission.
  - a. Submit Transmission PATS Cases by consuming the web services at designated endpoint (see section 5.2).
  - b. Get filing status for 3.a by consuming the web services
  - c. Get submission status for 3.a by consuming the web services.
  - d. EFAST2 PATS Certification Team Steps:
    - (1) Review submissions
    - (2) Approve / Reject – An email will be sent indicating whether the PATS Test Cases passed or failed due to some issue and what that issue was. If approved, proceed to 3.e. If rejected, go back to 3.a.
    - (3) When approved an email will be sent to the vendor requesting affidavit signature
  - e. Submit Affidavit for Transmission Software online.
  - f. Vendor will receive an email from the EFAST2 PATS system informing them that their transmission software has been approved.
4. Filing Preparation Software Certification

**Note:** Filing Preparation Software vendors who wish to participate in PATS testing prior to January 1, 2010, will be able to use Filing Transmission Software in a “Pending Affidavit” state. However, certifications will not be complete until the affidavits are signed on or after January 1, 2010 on the EFAST2 website.

These (Filing Preparation Software) PATS packages will include PDF files provided to the vendor for SendSubmission, GetFilingStatus, and GetSubmissionStatus. The vendors are responsible to put the values from these files into their software. The status of each PATS Test Case will be sent to the vendor as an XML response from the EFAST2 system.

- a. Submit Filing Preparation Software PATS Test Cases by consuming the web services at designated endpoint (see section 5.2).
- b. Get filing status for 4.a. by consuming the web services
- c. Get submission status for 4.a. by consuming the web services
- d. EFAST2 PATS Certification Team steps:
  - (1) If approved, proceed to 4.e. If rejected, go back to 4.a.  
When approved an email will be sent to the vendor requesting affidavit signature
- e. Submit Affidavit for Filing Preparation Software by logging into the EFAST2 system and returning Third Party Software screen and selecting the Affidavit link, accepting and submitting the Affidavit.
- f. Vendor will receive an email from the EFAST2 PATS informing them that their filing preparation software has been certified.

## Appendix B - Third Party Software Affidavit

Once all of the PATS test cases have been accepted by the PATS facility, the third party vendor will complete the certification process by submitting an online affidavit. It is available at the designated URL (see Section 5.2). The affidavit confirms the vendor has completed and documented all necessary testing outside of the PATS test cases. This includes, at a minimum:

- Filer access to official Government filer instructions for Form 5500 series filings
- Filer access to most recent version of Government-approved EFAST2 schemas, edit tests, and error codes
- Schema validation of individual forms and schedules as well as assembled filings
- Virus check of binary attachments
- Validation of assembled filing using EFAST2 edit tests, reporting Government-specified error information
- Calculation of bypass codes as part of edit tests validation
- Creation of printable facsimile of all forms, schedules, and attachments consistent with the official Government forms
- Documentation of required host environment and verification that all prerequisites exist a time of filing preparation software installation
- Integrity of electronic signature
- Valid XML filing data
- Protection of filing header information – the header shall not be directly editable by filers, but instead shall be automatically populated only by certified third party software each time the assembled filing is signed
- Timestamps in the filing header
- Once the filing is electronically signed, any modifications to filing data will result in an invalid signature and header information.

Once the affidavit has been completed and reviewed, the third party vendor will receive notification of certification and then be able to create and submit filings to EFAST2 production system. The notification is provided via the affidavit confirmation screen on the EFAST2 Web Portal.

**Note:** Filing Preparation Software vendors who wish to participate in PATS testing prior to January 1, 2010, will be able to use Filing Transmission Software in a “Pending Affidavit” state. However, certifications will not be complete until the affidavits are signed on or after January 1, 2010 on the EFAST2 website.