



## NEWS AND TIPS FOR THE 2026 ORLANDO VARSITY NATIONAL LIFESMARTS CHAMPIONSHIP

### ***National LifeSmarts Championship 2026: Edition 1*** ***Information for Coaches & Teams***

**Focus: Deadlines, attire, scholarships, pin swap and more!**

Dear Coaches and Team members,

We are so excited to see you in Orlando, April 15-18, 2026, for the the 33<sup>rd</sup> Varsity National LifeSmarts Championship! We will share updates and reminders with you through this *Orlando Outlook* newsletter.



#### **Rooming update for overflow hotel**

For those teams who will be staying at the overflow hotel: If you have not responded to the email confirming the number of rooms you need, please let Cheryl know so that the block can be finalized. Coaches will be notified one we have the block secured so that you can finalize your booking Thank you all for working with us to be certain everyone has rooms for the Championship.



#### **Team social media photos due NOW – [Please send ASAP!](#)**

Thanks to everyone who has already submitted their team photo for social media. Hopefully, you and your team are following us online as we have already begun posting these. *Just a note:* We will take photos during the registration process at Nationals with and without the team coach(es). We prefer these social media photos to include just the students. Thank you!



#### **Don't forget our second coach Zoom!**

Thanks so much to everyone who attended the first coach Zoom. As a reminder, coaches should only plan to attend one Zoom. **Note:** Zooms are for Coaches and Assistant Coaches only, not students.

- Monday, March 16, 2026 at 3:00 PM Eastern  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89348911125?pwd=bNFNUtTmU1RRsmOnal3wUDciCioDxd.1>
  - o Meeting ID: 893 4891 1125
  - o Passcode: 881853

We look forward to “seeing” you there!

### **Reminder about Guests:**

The National LifeSmarts Championship is a **closed** event. Teams and coaches have earned their right to be here. Only registered coaches/ assistant coaches, competitors, alumni volunteers, adult volunteers, sponsors, state coordinators, invited LEAP members, and the LifeSmarts/ NCL/ Conference team are allowed to participate. Parents are only allowed to attend if serving as a Coach, Assistant Coach or for medical assistance to their child. Admission to all LifeSmarts events will be monitored. Thank you for understanding.



### **Other Important Information:**

#### **Sarah Weinberg Memorial Scholarship – Deadline Extended to March 17<sup>th</sup>**

Coaches may nominate one graduating Senior for the Sarah Weinberg LifeSmarts Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship is awarded annually to a LifeSmarts participant who demonstrates a commitment to volunteer service work, like Sarah did. Scholarship nominations are due March 17<sup>th</sup>. One \$750 scholarship will be awarded. Students do not have to be members of teams competing in the National LifeSmarts Championship. For additional information, [click here](#). Nominate your student [here](#).

#### **Deadline Extended Until March 23 for OTC Medicine Mentor Presentations**

Teams not participating in the Meta project, may present up to 4 OTC Medicine Mentor presentations for travel stipends. Teams should visit [this website](#) for information and teaching resources. [This form](#) should be filled out for every presentation. Photos should also be shared as part of the report. If you have questions, please contact [Elener@nclnet.org](mailto:Elener@nclnet.org)



**Questions about team attire** - We have had several questions about attire for the Varsity National LifeSmarts Championship. There is no required attire, however, no shorts should be worn for competitions. Many teams choose to dress the same or “Match” but other teams don’t. Some teams have traditional fun shirts they wear for the first competitions. It is totally up to you and your team! Here are a few suggestions based on what we have observed in the past few years.

- For Team photos and Competition 3 (Sister Team Activity) – Team T-shirts and jeans or khakis. It is always fun to remember you are representing your school, organization, and/or state in any of the photos and the competitions. You can also wear or bring small props to represent your school, club, organization, community, or state in the team photos. We have signs for our student leadership organizations and LifeSmarts sponsors to be used in photos as well.
- Competitions 4 and 5: Polo style shirts and khakis or nice jeans.
- Competition 6 and 7: Polo style shirts and khakis or jeans.
- For *Splish Splash Tropical Bash* – Tropical attire, shorts, t-shirts, swimwear in good taste, swim Coverups, etc.
- You can also wear [LifeSmarts Merch!](#)
- Semi-Final and Finals: Nice shirts and dress pants or khakis with or without coat and tie; Dresses or nice shirt and slacks or skirt.

## LifeSmarts Challenge Procedure

### We have received several requests for a refresher on the Challenge Procedure

#### Quick version:

Once per match a team may challenge a Challenge Question (the open-ended questions that are worth 10 points). They may challenge when they are not awarded points for an answer they have given. The Referee will throw out the question and select a new question to be read. The new replacement question is open to the team or teams that were eligible to answer the question that was thrown out by the challenge. If a team issues a challenge at a time when they were the only team eligible to answer the original question, they will be the only team eligible to answer the replacement question. Regular challenge question rules apply; students must buzz in if they wish to be called upon to answer, and there is no conferring between team members.

#### Teams that wish to challenge a question will follow these procedures:

- Teams may challenge the judges' ruling once per match
- Team may only challenge *Challenge Questions* (10 points questions where the buzzers are used)
- A challenge results in the question being thrown out and replaced with another question
- To indicate a challenge to a question for which their team was not awarded points, a player on the team must raise a challenge card immediately after the Question Master or Head Judge says are not awarding points for the answer provided (any student may issue the challenge)
- The Referee will note that the team has used its challenge for the match. The question will be thrown out and the Referee will select a new question to replace the original question
- The students who were eligible to buzz in to answer the question that has been challenged are eligible to buzz in and answer the replacement question. If both teams were eligible to answer the original question, students on both teams are eligible to try to buzz in to answer the new question
- If only one team was eligible to answer the question, only students on that team may buzz in and answer the replacement question (this means the other team already had an opportunity to answer the question and gave an incorrect answer)
- Teams may not challenge once the Question Master has begun re-reading the question for the other team
- Once the Question Master has begun reading a new question
- An answer given by the other team
- Challenges do not accumulate; if a challenge is not used during a match, it is no longer available to the team
- LifeSmarts has its challenge procedure in place to allow students to advocate for themselves when they believe they have given a correct answer that was not awarded points

## Room Share

Have an odd number of male or female students on your team? Or would you be willing to share a room as a coach or volunteer? Share your needs or extra room space in the [LifeSmarts Coaches Group](#) on Facebook. We know of several teams and coaches who are interested in sharing. Thank you for your help!



### Notes on Flights:

- **Don't miss your flight!** Travelers are [enduring long wait times](#) as a partial federal government shutdown strains staffing at the Transportation Security Administration. [Check these resources](#) before waiting too long to leave for the airport.
- **Real ID Reminder** - As you prepare to attend our Varsity National LifeSmarts Championship, ensure your identification meets new federal travel standards.
  - *A Real ID is required for all individuals aged 18 and older to board domestic flights.*
  - If a **teen is 18 or older**, they will need a Real ID, a valid passport, or another TSA-approved form of documentation.
  - Teens **under 18 are not required** to have a Real ID for air travel, as they can fly with an accompanying adult with the necessary identification.
    - **Non-Parent Adult:** If the teen is traveling with a non-parent adult, a signed consent letter from the parent/guardian is advised.
    - **Best Practice:** While not required, bringing a copy of a school ID or passport is recommended for identification verification.

## Pin Swap

Immediately following dinner on Wednesday evening, the Pin Swap provides time for exchanging pins, buttons, stickers, or anything representative of your state with other LifeSmarts competitors. Our LEAP panel will also be leading icebreakers and games so that everyone can have fun and get to know others as well as their sister team. While pin trading is optional, it is a very fun way to meet and get to know friends from all over the country. All teams should remain in the area to participate in the get-to-know-you games and the fun. Door prizes will be awarded.

Look for free items that represent your state, city or town, your school or club. Local clubs, banks, businesses, Chambers of Commerce, and state welcome centers may be able to help you with swap items. You may also make an item to represent your town, school, club, or state to trade! (Below are a few examples of items)

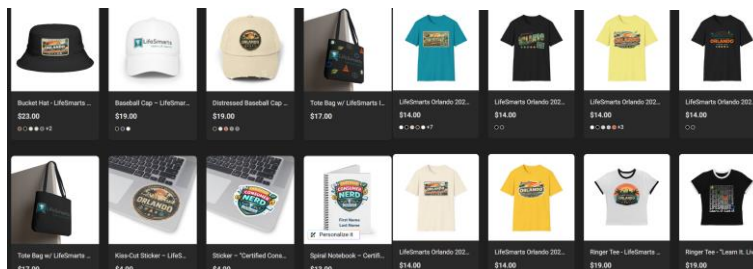




## LifeSmarts Merch!

Check out our **updated** [LifeSmarts online store](https://lifesmarts.store)! We have LifeSmarts branded T-shirts, Short & Long-sleeved t-shirts, polos-style shirts, bucket hats, zip hoodies, baseball caps and tote bags. **You can even personalize shirts for you and your team!**

You must pre-order now so that the items can be shipped to your home or school prior to the event. We can't wait to see what you choose! Get your LifeSmarts merch today! Feel free to share the link with anyone who would like to order: <https://lifesmarts.store>



## Plan to attend to attend the LEAP Meet & Greet Mentoring Zoom

The LifeSmarts Engagement Advisory Panel (LEAP) has scheduled their first mentoring session for Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM Eastern. (this is open to all LifeSmarts team members!)

*Please share the following with your team:*

Hey LifeSmarters!

Your LEAP board is inviting you to our informational Zoom meeting on **Wednesday, March 25 at 7:30 pm EST**. You do not want to miss this amazing opportunity to learn more about Nationals and gain beneficial information. Our mentorship program is our way of helping you and your team succeed in LifeSmarts! Don't miss your chance to hear important updates, ask questions, get to know amazing people, and give input! Join us here: [LifeSmarts LEAP \(Teen LifeSmarts Engagement Advisory Panel\) Meet and Greet Mentoring Session](#); Passcode 151913



## Dates and Deadlines:

- **March 16, 2026** – [Anti-Counterfeiting Digital Poster Contest](#) – Due
- **March 16, 2026** – **3:00 PM ET** – Coach Zoom Meeting 2 (see Page 1 and Coach memo)
- **March 17, 2026** – [Sarah Weinberg LifeSmarts Memorial Scholarship](#) Due
- **March 18, 2026** – [Team Travel Plans](#) Form Submission Deadline
- **March 23, 2026** – [LifeSmarts LEAP \(Teen LifeSmarts Engagement Advisory Panel\) Meet and Greet Mentoring Session](#) – All teams are invited. 7:30 PM Eastern; Passcode 051913
- **March 23, 2026** – **Overflow** Hotel Reservation Numbers and Room Roster [Submission Form](#) Due (if not previously submitted)
- **March 23, 2026** – [ConsumerMan LifeSmarts Scholarship Application](#) Due
- **March 23, 2026** – [OTC Medicine Safety Mentoring Team Stipend Reports /Requests](#) Due
- **March 23, 2026 (on or by)** – Anti-Counterfeiting Digital Poster Contest Finalists Notified

- **March 25, 2026 – Midnight EST – [Competition 1: OTC Medicine Safety Video Submission](#)** Deadline (see Coach Memo for details)
- **March 25, 2026 – Midnight EST – [Team Roll Call Video Submission](#)** Deadline – see Coach Memo for details; See [Team information Center](#) for examples
- **March 26, 2026 – 7:00 PM EDT – Optional Individual Topic Assessment – Session 1** (Details will be sent to coaches to share with students)
- **March 30, 2026 – 7:00 PM EDT – Optional Individual Topic Assessment – Session 2** (Details will be sent to coaches to share with students)
- **March 31, 2026 – Deadline for Varsity Teams competing in the National LifeSmarts Championship to have completed the Intuit Hour of Personal Finance.** Details are in the coach memo online.

#### April 2026

- **April 1, 2026 – [Pin Design Contest](#)** Deadline
- **April 3, 2026 – [OTC Medicine Safety Mentor Individual Scholarships](#)** Due
- **April 3, 2026 – [LifeSmarts Impact Scholarship](#)** Due
- **April 3, 2026 – [Lisa Hertzberg LifeSmarts Legacy of Leadership Scholarship](#)** Due
- **April 3, 2026 – [Student of the Year Nominations](#)** Due
- **April 3, 2026 – [LifeSmarts Coach of the Year](#)** Nominations Due
- **April 3, 2026 – [Meta Online Safety Pilot Reports](#)** Due
- **April 5, 2026 – [LifeSmarts LifeSparks Team Achievement Award](#)** Due



#### Resources

- More information is available in the [National LifeSmarts Championship 2026 Team Information Center](#)
- Be sure to review the [State Champion Coach Memo](#)
- If you have any questions, please email us: [Cheryl Varnadoe](#).



**Next edition:** Ideas for touring, sister teams and more!

Until next week,  
The LifeSmarts Team

*P.S. Be sure to follow us on Instagram and FB for competition topics and question clues!*