Bullying Basics

Questions parents can ask children about bullying

• Have you ever been teased at school?
• Do you know other children who have been teased?
• How long has this been going on?
• Have you ever told your teacher about the teasing?
• What kinds of things do children tease you about?
• At recess, do you play with other children or by yourself?

Ways children bully

• Cyber bullying: Harassment through e-mail, instant messaging, Internet chat rooms and electronic gadgets such as camera cell phones.
• Emotional bullying: Isolating or excluding from activities or spreading rumors.
• Physical bullying: Kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, hair pulling or threats of physical harm.
• Racist bullying: Racial slurs, offensive gestures or making jokes about cultural traditions.
• Sexual bullying: Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive or inappropriate comments.
• Verbal bullying: Name-calling, incessant mocking and laughing at a child’s expense.

Responses to bullies

• Hold back anger; getting angry just makes the bully feel more powerful.
• Never get physical or bully back.
• Act brave, walk away and ignore the bully. Sooner or later, the bully probably will get bored.
• Use humor or give a compliment to throw the bully off guard, but do not use humor to make fun of the bully.
• Tell an adult. Studies show that schools where principals crack down on this type of behavior have less bullying.
• Talking about it can be a good outlet for fears and frustrations.
• Use the buddy system. When one person speaks out against a bully, it helps others take a stand.
• Join social organizations, clubs or sports programs. Being with other kids improves self-esteem and creates a larger group of peers to turn to.

Sources: Thurston-Mason County Medical Society Alliance, kidshealth.org (from an article in The Olympian, Lacey Today section November 3, 2005 [www.theolympian.com])