

Should TLC Cancel '19 Kids and Counting' After Duggar Scandal or Stand Strong?

Despite the recent controversy surrounding the show "19 Kids and Counting" could return to TLC's schedule.

The Discovery Communications-owned network has not canceled the program in the wake of the recent disclosure that Josh Duggar, one of the central figures in the show, admitted to molesting teenage girls 12 years ago. "Kids" focuses on the family of Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar and their 19 children, and has been on the air since 2008. Josh Duggar is the oldest of the family's children, all of whom have names that start with the letter J.

The company has not yet decided whether the show should continue or be canceled, according to a person familiar with the situation. If the program were to continue, this person added, it would have to do so without Josh Duggar and with an emphasis on other members of the Duggar family. The most recent cycle of the series concluded in mid-May, but Discovery has pulled it from TLC and the Web.

The Duggar family has issued a statement in support of their son, who has stepped down from a job he holds at the Family Research Council, a conservative Christian lobbying organization based in Washington, D.C.

Discovery is being methodical in its deliberations, this person said, allowing the devout Christian clan at the center of the series to deal with the crisis at hand; "19 Kids and Counting" is not currently in production, this person said.

Advertiser support for the program appears to be wavering. General Mills, Choice Hotels Intl. and Payless Shoe Source

have all indicated they are working to keep their ads separate from “19.” In most cases, advertisers put in place a larger deal with the network or even an array of outlets owned by Discovery, rather than buying a particular program. None of the advertisers said they were pulling ads from TLC or Discovery in general.

“19 Kids and Counting” isn’t the first controversial program Discovery has had to scrutinize. In 2011, TLC launched “All-American Muslim,” a reality program that followed Muslim families in Dearborn, Mich. Lowe’s, the large home-improvement retailer, pulled its support of the show within weeks, after being contacted by an advocacy group known as the Florida Family Association. TLC did not cancel the first season of the show but declined to produce another, citing low ratings.

In 2014 TLC had to grapple with reports that June Shannon, one of the central figures in the popular reality series “Here Comes Honey Boo Boo,” was dating a man convicted of child molestation. The program was taken off the air.

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