

TLC's '19 Kids and Counting' Duggar Family Breaks Silence on Family Molestation

Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar, the parents on the TLC reality show "19 Kids and Counting," defended their son Josh in an interview with Fox News on Wednesday as they addressed his molestation of young girls, including his sisters, as a teenager.

The Duggars said Josh Duggar, 27, had told them 12 years ago he had inappropriately touched his younger sisters while they slept. They said there were incidents with five different girls.

"He said he was just curious about girls and he had gone in and touched them over their clothes when they were sleeping. They hadn't even known he had done it," Jim Bob Duggar told "The Kelly File" host Megyn Kelly.

TLC, which is owned by Discovery Communications, pulled all episodes of "19 Kids," its top-rated show, last month after reports surfaced that Josh Duggar had molested underage girls. He has never been arrested or charged.

As of Wednesday, TLC had no comment on the future of the show. At least a dozen advertisers, including food company General Mills Inc and retailer Walgreen Co, have pulled out.

Jim Bob Duggar said "we're fine whether they continue to film us or no."

The conservative Arkansas-based Duggars have chronicled their struggles and triumphs since 2008 in "19 Kids," and are known for their Christian family values.

In an emotional interview, the parents said they were

“devastated” and felt like “failures” regarding their son’s actions and said they tried to protect their girls with “boundaries and safeguards.”

Jim Bob Duggar said that because of his son’s young age, “he was a child preying on a child.” They said they sent Josh, then 15, on a Christian-based treatment program for a few months after he had fondled one of his sisters, whom Kelly did not name but said was under ten at the time.

They later reported the incidents to police.

The Duggars echoed numerous details that were first revealed by *In Touch* magazine last month, which published a document it said it obtained from Arkansas’ Springdale Police Department detailing multiple instances in which Josh Duggar molested underage girls.

Jim Bob Duggar said they were considering legal action against the leaked police reports that were sealed to protect underage victims. Michelle Duggar, in tears, said she felt “betrayed” by the leak, saying her girls have been “victimized more in the last couple of weeks than 12 years ago.”

Jessa Duggar, 22, called herself “one of the victims” of her brother’s actions and said that what he did in the past was “very wrong,” but defended him, in an excerpt released by Fox News on Wednesday.

“I do want to speak up in his defense against people who are calling him a child molester or a pedophile or a rapist, some people are saying. I’m like that is so overboard and a lie,” Jessa Duggar told Kelly.

The full interview will air on Friday, and also include Jill Duggar, 24, another sister and victim.

Josh Duggar released a statement last month apologizing for acting “inexcusably” 12 years ago. He also resigned from his

job at the Christian lobbying group Family Research Council.

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