

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

TV 
Parental
Guidelines

THE TV PARENTAL GUIDELINES
MONITORING BOARD

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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

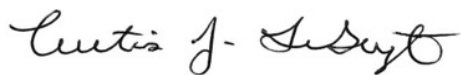
I am honored to serve as chairman of the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, a group critical to ensuring consistent use and application of the television rating system. Since 1996, the Monitoring Board has assisted parents in making well-informed decisions about the age-appropriateness of television programs for their families.

Viewers have unparalleled choices when consuming content and the Monitoring Board plays a pivotal role in upholding the highest industry standards for participating networks and streaming services, especially as the television and entertainment industry rapidly expands and evolves. As I conclude my first year as chairman, I am honored to have been a part of the Monitoring Board's accomplishments over the past year and our unwavering commitment to viewers, including:

- The Monitoring Board's Streaming Task Force worked to strengthen the effectiveness of the [Streaming Best Practices guidelines](#) to ensure a consistent ratings experience for families across streaming platforms.
- The Monitoring Board held four spot checks in 2023 to audit and discuss program ratings across the entertainment industry to ensure that programs are rated in a uniform manner among member organizations.
- The Monitoring Board ensured that every ratings complaint was reviewed by the network or streaming service in question.
- On September 17, 2023, the Monitoring Board held its annual meeting to discuss 2023 correspondence, consistent application of the TV ratings system and updates from the Spot Check and Streaming Task Force groups.

I would like to thank all members of the Monitoring Board for their continued work to help parents and families make informed decisions about their television viewing. I look forward to another year working with the industry's best and brightest.

Sincerely,



Curtis LeGeyt
Chairman, TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board



ABOUT THE TV PARENTAL GUIDELINES MONITORING BOARD



The TV Parental Guidelines (also known as TV ratings) were created in 1996 to help parents make informed decisions about what programs are suitable for their children. Designed by leading TV industry organizations in consultation with representatives from a broad range of interested stakeholders, the TV Parental Guidelines are easily recognizable and easy to use. The ratings work in conjunction with parental control technology, such as the V-Chip that is built into most televisions and set-top boxes, which allows parents to block programs they determine to be inappropriate for their families. TV ratings are available for both television programming designed specifically for children and general audiences. The ratings provide information about the content and age-appropriateness of programs and apply to most television shows. News, sports, religious and home shopping programming are not rated. The ratings information is prominently displayed at the beginning of all rated programming and often after commercial breaks. The TV Parental Guidelines are available in the TV listings of many newspapers, other printed and online program listings and on numerous websites. In conjunction with the ratings, the television industry established the Monitoring Board to help ensure that ratings are applied on a consistent basis across networks and programs. The Monitoring Board provides oversight by frequently reviewing and updating its practices as a result of feedback received from the public, responses to complaints and other input and discussion among members to ensure that ratings are consistently applied from program to program. The Monitoring Board meets annually to consider and review correspondence received, discuss current research and review any other issues relevant to the TV Parental Guidelines.

The Monitoring Board is composed of up to 24 members: a chairman who is selected on a rotating basis between the presidents of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the Motion Picture Association (MPA) and the Internet & Television Association (NCTA); as many as 18 industry members from the broadcast, cable and creative communities appointed by NAB, NCTA or MPA; and up to five public interest groups with a focus on children and the media appointed by the Monitoring Board chairman.

CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE MONITORING BOARD:

- A+E Networks
- America
- Fox Corporation
- The Walt Disney Company
- AMC Networks
- Call for Action
- Hulu
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- Entertainment Industries Council
- NBCUniversal
- Univision
- Boy and GirlsClub of
- Call for Action
- National PTA
- Warner Bros. Discovery
- Paramount



STREAMING TASK FORCE



In 2020, the Monitoring Board established the Streaming Task Force to review how the TV Parental Guidelines are utilized across the wide breadth of video streaming services that have launched and/or will launch. The task force also was created to better engage with streaming services that do not currently participate in the TV Parental Guidelines and to formulate best practices for how to apply ratings on streaming services. The task force established their recommendations in 2021 and they are listed in the [Best Practices Guidelines](#).

In 2023, the task force discussed common content labels to increase consistency across platforms, with plans to continue updating and revising as additional stakeholder and public feedback is received in 2024. The group surveyed members on the use of descriptors and their placement in programming and also discussed global considerations, including how ratings systems in other countries can impact international content. All correspondence from 2023 related to streaming was shared with the task force, regardless of whether the streamer participates in the TV Parental Guidelines system.

The Streaming Task Force plans to meet quarterly in 2024 to continue its efforts to engage with those streaming services that do not participate in the TV Parental Guidelines.



TV RATING SPOT CHECK REVIEWS



As part of its commitment to ensuring accurate and consistent application of the guidelines, the Monitoring Board voted at its 2019 annual meeting to formally establish a spot check review program. The program is designed to assess whether television programs are receiving accurate and consistent ratings across different networks and time slots. This concept was piloted in 2019, formally rolled out in January 2020 and continues today. In 2022, the Monitoring Board began including streaming service programming as part of the spot check review.

To conduct the spot check review, the Monitoring Board established four groups that meet quarterly. Each of the Monitoring Board's public interest board members were assigned to one of the four groups to ensure that the process incorporated broader perspectives and feedback.

To ensure that the spot check review encompassed a wide variety of content and intended audiences, programming was selected from each of the Monitoring Board representatives' networks at a randomly predetermined time on a specific day of each calendar quarter. For instance, one group reviewed programming shown during early morning hours, which often is intended for younger children. Another group reviewed late-night programs, which are typically intended for adult audiences. Two additional groups evaluated programs that appeared on television during daytime and prime-time hours.

After reviewing their respective programs, each group meets to determine if it agrees or disagrees with the rating assigned to each program. If a group determines that it disagrees with a rating, a dialogue is initiated with the network that aired the program. If the network disagrees with the review group's determination, then the issue is taken to the chairman of the Monitoring Board to determine the next steps, including consideration before the full Monitoring Board, which has the authority to adjudicate disputes if consensus discussion does not resolve the question.

The 2023 spot check review indicated that age ratings and descriptors were applied consistently and accurately to the content reviewed. There was one instance where the review group questioned a program's rating descriptors and the network agreed to add descriptors to the program's rating. There were no other ratings discrepancies in 2023.

The spot check review worked as intended, reinforcing that the content was rated correctly while providing Monitoring Board members with the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about the application of ratings and use of descriptors. These conversations will help entertainment companies and streaming services hone their decision-making on which ratings to apply and when and how to use descriptors consistently.



ANNUAL MONITORING BOARD MEETING



On September 14, 2023, Chairman Curtis LeGeyt and NAB hosted the annual meeting of the Monitoring Board. This meeting brought together members to review 2023 activities, discuss correspondence and ratings complaints and plan for the year ahead. The following presents an overview of the 2023 annual meeting.

REVIEW OF 2023 ACTIVITIES

In 2023, the Monitoring Board oversaw the completion and promotion of the fourth annual report, continued to hold quarterly meetings for the Streaming Task Force and TV ratings spot check and held its annual meeting in September. More information on these specific activities can be found on pages 4-5 of this report.

STREAMING TASK FORCE

The Streaming Task Force reported on its activities throughout 2023 and discussed the streaming ratings complaints that the Monitoring Board received throughout the year. The task force discussed streamlining content labels and improving engagement with streaming services that are not under the purview of the TV Parental Guidelines. The task force also surveyed members on their organizations' utilization and placement of descriptors. They discussed their respective networks' streaming services, challenges faced when applying ratings to streaming programming and global ratings considerations when networks provide content outside of the United States. The task force will meet quarterly throughout 2024 and continue conversations with streaming services. More information about the Streaming Task Force can be found on Page 4 of this report.

TV RATINGS SPOT CHECK

For the fourth full year, the Monitoring Board conducted its TV ratings spot check review, which audited content programming aired on Monitoring Board members' networks to ensure accurate and consistent use of the TV Parental Guidelines. During the meeting, representatives from three of the four spot check review groups presented their findings (the fourth spot check group took place after the annual meeting). Monitoring Board members agreed that this process serves as a valuable tool to better understand the application of the TV Parental Guidelines, helps public interest Monitoring Board members gain insight into the rating process and ensures that age ratings and descriptors are applied consistently and accurately across networks during different time slots. The Monitoring Board agreed to continue the spot check review program in 2024. More information about the TV ratings spot check review can be found on page 5 of this report.



ANNUAL MONITORING BOARD MEETING



REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Prior to the annual meeting, a summary of the correspondence and complaints received by the Monitoring Board was shared with board members. During the meeting, members reviewed and discussed all correspondence received in 2023.

PREVIEW OF 2024 ACTIVITIES

In addition to continuing the activities listed above, the Monitoring Board will continue to explore opportunities to raise greater awareness and effectively communicate with the public on the TV Parental Guidelines. Biennially, the board conducts quantitative research on the TV Parental Guidelines and will do so again in 2024.



2023 CORRESPONDENCE SUMMARY

JANUARY - DECEMBER

One of the primary roles of the Monitoring Board is to address complaints about the ratings on specific programs. The Monitoring Board fulfills this duty by reviewing all correspondence, facilitating discussion about the application of the ratings and working to expeditiously resolve concerns.

In 2023, the Monitoring Board responded to all incoming public correspondence. Ratings complaints are shared with representatives from the applicable entertainment industry companies to ensure greater awareness of ratings complaints and to facilitate a timely response. The board works closely with the appropriate industry representatives to explain the criteria for the rating to the viewer. In some cases, the company may decide to modify its rating.

From January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023, the Monitoring Board received 327 public comments — 6 letters, 66 phone calls and 255 emails. There were 84 comments about the general content or casting of shows, 49 complaints focused on commercials and advertisements and 49 complaints regarding scheduling changes. Only 13 complaints provided comments on the TV Parental Guideline ratings, continuing a downward trend in ratings complaints that began in 2021.

Of the 13 ratings complaints, eight were directed at broadcast, cable and streaming services that participate in the TV Parental Guidelines. The other five complaints were about streaming services that do not participate in the TV ratings. Ratings complaints about programming on a broadcast, cable network or streaming service that participates in the TV Parental Guidelines are shared with the respective entertainment company for review.

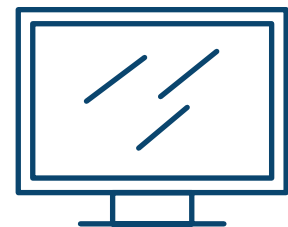


BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT SPECIFIC PROGRAMS THAT THE MONITORING BOARD RECEIVED THIS YEAR, ALONG WITH A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE COMPLAINTS.

- In January, a viewer complained that a TV series is no longer televised on Monday nights. The Monitoring Board responded to the viewer and explained that it has no oversight over programming and scheduling decisions and recommended that they reach out to the network directly with their concerns.
- In March, a viewer complained about a commercial they saw while watching a network's program and requested that the network stop airing sexual commercials. The Monitoring Board responded that it does not have oversight over commercials or advertisements since its focus is on ensuring the consistent use of the TV Parental Guidelines. The feedback also was forwarded to the appropriate industry representative.
- In June, a viewer requested that the rating of a show be re-rated from its original TV-Y7 rating due to the show's references to nudism. The Monitoring Board reached out to the industry representative for clarification and notified the viewer that his concern had been shared with the entertainment company for further consideration. The network representative responded directly to the viewer and informed him that following a review of the complaint, the network was comfortable with the TV-Y7 rating because the reference was nonsexual and in line with the show's sense of humor. The representative thanked the viewer for sharing his concerns.
- In July, several viewers emailed the Monitoring Board stating that they were upset with a network's streaming service because it had removed a song from one of the programs. The Monitoring Board shared the correspondence with the company's representative on the board. The Monitoring Board responded to the viewer and explained that it does not have oversight over program content decisions on streaming platforms since its focus is on ensuring consistent use of the TV ratings across participating broadcast, cable and satellite networks and streaming services. The board also notified the viewers that their concerns had been shared with the company.
- In September, a viewer requested that an S descriptor be included in a program's rating due to the inclusion of a scene sexual in nature. The Monitoring Board reached out to the appropriate industry representative for clarification and notified the viewer that his concern had been shared with the entertainment company for further consideration. The network representative responded directly to the viewer and informed him that following a review of the complaint, an S descriptor had been left out of the rating by mistake and that the rating had been corrected.
- In November, the Monitoring Board received five separate calls from viewers who requested assistance with a streaming service's account services. One viewer requested to remove parental controls from her account while another viewer requested assistance with signing into her account on television. The Monitoring Board explained that it does not provide customer service assistance with subscription and streaming services since its mission is to ensure consistent use of the TV Parental Guidelines. The board also provided the streaming service's customer service contact information to each viewer for further assistance.



CONCLUSION



In 2023, the Monitoring Board focused on ensuring the accurate use of the TV ratings on traditional cable and broadcast channels, as well as on streaming services. The Monitoring Board worked on improving the spot check review and the Streaming Task Force, while also responding to all public correspondence. The goal of these efforts was to make sure that parents are aware of the TV Parental Guideline ratings to help them make informed decisions about what programs are appropriate for their children and ensure uniformity across the TV ratings and platforms.

For more information, please visit www.tvguidelines.org.



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