

FIRST DIVISION

[A.M. NO. P-04-1880, March 18, 2005]

**OFFICE OF THE COURT ADMINISTRATOR, COMPLAINANT, VS.
MR. FRANCISCO P. BAGUIO, INTERPRETER III, REGIONAL TRIAL
COURT, BRANCH 13, CEBU CITY, RESPONDENT.**

R E S O L U T I O N

QUISUMBING, J.:

In a **Letter** dated March 12, 2003, Deputy Court Administrator Zenaida N. Elepaño informed Presiding Judge Meinrado P. Paredes, Regional Trial Court of Cebu City, Branch 13, that Francisco P. Baguio, Interpreter III of the same court, incurred tardiness 13 times for July, 11 times for September, 13 times for October, and 10 times for December 2002. Baguio was directed to explain why he should not be reprimanded pursuant to Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 23, series of 1998.^[1] In his **Letter** dated April 11, 2003, Baguio replied that he resided 23 kilometers away from his workplace in Cebu City and at times, his tardiness was due to traffic.

In a **Certification** dated March 15, 2004, the Leave Division of the Office of Administrative Services also reported that Baguio was tardy 17 times in January and 15 times in February 2003.

In a **Memorandum** dated June 28, 2004, Court Administrator Presbitero J. Velasco, Jr. recommended that Baguio be reprimanded for habitual tardiness and warned that repetition of the same or similar offense would warrant severe penalty.

Mr. Baguio's habitual tardiness seriously compromises efficiency and hampers public service. He falls short of the stringent standard of conduct demanded from everyone connected with the administration of justice.^[2] We have time and again said, officials and employees of the judiciary must be role models in the faithful observance of the constitutional canon that a public office is a public trust. Inherent in this mandate is the observance of the prescribed office hours and the efficient use of every moment for public service, if only to recompense the Government, and ultimately, the people, who shoulder the cost of maintaining the judiciary.^[3] Strict observance of official time is therefore mandatory lest the dignity of the justice system be compromised.

Baguio's explanation of his habitual tardiness is unsatisfactory and we cannot countenance his cavalier attitude toward public service. We have previously ruled that moral obligations, performance of household chores, traffic problems, and health, domestic and financial concerns are not sufficient reasons to excuse habitual tardiness.^[4]