History of PIE System

The Social Work profession has struggled for many years to establish its unique identity among the human services profession. An important step in this struggle has been the acknowledgement of the "person in environment" (PIE) perspective as the domain of social work. This effort had been, in itself, a challenge to the dual construct which divided social workers into person-focused or environment-focused camps. The "person in environment" perspective unified the field and recognized the social functioning problems of individuals and families while simultaneously acknowledging the problems in the social institutions of society that affect social functioning. The "person-in-environment" perspective has become the philosophy undergirding the social work profession.

Another important step in its struggle for identity has been the need for a social work classification system – a classification system that is separate from the DSM. In the early 1980's, a task force of practitioners and academicians, led by Dr. James Karls and Dr. Karin Wandrei, was formed to develop a classification system useable in all fields of social work practice and one that would be both user and client friendly. After a period of field testing, the book, Person-in-Environment (PIE) System, (Karls, J. & Wandrei, 1994) and an instruction manual, PIE Manual-Person-in-Environment System (Karls, J. & Wandrei,1994) were published by NASW Press. In 2008, a new version of PIE and its accompanying software, CompuPIE (Karls, J. & O'Keefe, M., 2008) were developed that incorporated feedback from PIE enthusiasts as to how to improve PIE. By 2015, the present author recognized the need for an updated PIE and CompuPIE especially given the publication of DSM 5. The present CompuPIE software is significantly more user friendly and is compatible with both Mac, PC and Linux users. Importantly, regardless of the changes over the years, the mission of PIE has remained the same -- to provide social workers and other practitioners a tool with which the problems and strengths presented by clients can be systematically and comprehensively assessed, described,

and addressed within an eclectic framework that highlights social work's unique contribution to the human service field.