Crisis programs merge

The Young Women’s Christian Association’s Safe Homes program merges with the Battered Women’s program effective Sunday, according to Clara Leach, YWCA executive director.

“This merger makes dollar sense for the community as a whole,” she says.

The merger is the final step in a gradual transition begun in 1982. The Safe Homes program discontinued its 24-hour crisis line after the Battered Women’s Program established a hot-line. Under the auspices of United Way, a formal agreement was signed in mid-1982 outlining the support function of the Safe Homes program and the primary role of the Battered Women’s program. The YWCA board of directors voted to release the Safe Homes program June 28. The association is a United Way agency.

The final step in the merger was the presentation of beepers to Ann Stehr, executive director of the Battered Women’s program. Donated by Goudchaux/Maison Blanche, the beepers have been used to call the Safe Homes volunteers.

“It’s the general policy of the YWCA to initiate programs to serve unmet community needs until another agency can sustain the program. Once another agency reaches that stage, we feel the program should be released to them so the YWCA can focus on other unmet community needs,” Ms. Leach says.

Career enrichment for women is one area to be looked into.

“Some programs offer basic courses in career development, but there is nothing past entry level positions,” she says.

“We are looking also at a growing phenomenon which is a serious problem - the latchkey child. We are looking at either some type of subsidized day care center. Or possibly a transportation pool is needed to get children to activities. Activities may exist but they cannot get to them” because parents work. “We are exploring possibilities at this point.”

The Safe Homes program offered shelter for three days in private homes to battered women in crisis situations. Zonta House, an emergency shelter operated by the Battered Women’s program, provides up to 30 days of shelter. Counseling and an advocacy service to women and children were also provided by both.

The Battered Women’s program is adapting Safe Homes to Safe Place. Private homes to shelter women and sometimes their children were not easy to find, Ms. Leach says. The new approach will be to ask apartment and motel owners and associations to provide temporary safe locations for women in need at times when Zonta House cannot accommodate all requests for shelter, Ms. Stehr says.

Anyone needing assistance from the Battered Women’s program may call 389-3001, a 24-hour service.

A YWCA resolution called on the Women’s Advocacy Bureau to transfer the $30,000 it provided Safe Homes to the Battered Women’s program.