

Aides: Cuomo sees big role for Axelrod

By MARC HUMBERT

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Gov. Mario Cuomo will soon hand state Health Commissioner David Axelrod expanded powers, but has no plans for the moment to name him a "super" commissioner for human services, administration officials said yesterday.

For more than a month, discussions have been going on within the Cuomo administration about the possible appointment of Dr. Axelrod as human services coordinator to oversee such areas as health, mental health and retardation services, social services, senior citizen programs and the like.

However, yesterday Cuomo spokesman Stephen Morello said there were no current plans to name Axelrod as a "czar" for human services, the sort of super cabinet position given last week to New York City investment banker John Michaelson in the economic development field.

Nonetheless, administration officials, who asked not to be identified, confirmed that Axelrod would be given expanded powers in the human services area and Morello agreed that was possible.

When Cuomo took office in January 1983, he instituted the concept of super commissioner by appointing Lawrence Kurlander, a former Monroe County district attorney, as the administration's criminal justice coordinator.

The governor, in nominating Michaelson to become state commerce commissioner and appointing him director of economic development, praised the

concept and said Kurlander had "improved coordination of the agencies involved in law enforcement and criminal justice and has enhanced implementation of the governor's criminal justice initiatives."

While sources close to Axelrod had said the health commissioner was in line for a similar position in the human services area, Morello said yesterday that such a decision had not been made.

"We're still looking at it and there will be some administrative changes made (involving Axelrod), but we have not decided to institute the kind of model that the governor has in the economic development field or the criminal justice area," said the Cuomo spokesman.

Morello declined to elaborate on what sort of new responsibilities Axelrod might be given by the governor. The commissioner could not be reached for comment. His spokesman, Peter Slocum, said Axelrod had left the state yesterday morning for a trip to the West Coast. Slocum said he did not know what new jobs Axelrod might be taking on for the governor.

"He (Axelrod) will be remaining as health commissioner no matter what else happens," said Slocum. As health commissioner, Axelrod is paid \$69,200 a year.

Administration sources said that one area where Axelrod might likely be given new power is the delivery of health services by such state agencies as the Office of Mental Health and the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.