

# So You Want to Be an FBI Agent

## Career Exploration Podcast

Music ([00:00](#)):

[Music]

Vicki Anderson ([00:03](#)):

I try to tell people to do stuff that they enjoy, study what they enjoy so they'll excel in their first job because when you get to the FBI and you get to the interview process, it's all about bragging about what you've done and the success you've had.

Janet Maltbie ([00:16](#)):

From the campus of Lorain County Community College. This is the career exploration podcast on college radio heard round the world LCCRadio.com the Boom. We explore careers, college majors and more so you can be a success here on the LCC campus and beyond. I believe completing a degree, pursuing passionate work and debt free living is key to your future. I'm here to help you on your journey and so are my guests today. In our program I discuss with special agent Vicki Anderson how to become an FBI agent and what the job is really like.

Vicki Anderson ([00:47](#)):

I would say to someone is if you're really interested, look at our website, read it thoroughly, learn everything you can cause a lot of information is on there.

Janet Maltbie ([00:57](#)):

Vicki Anderson has over 20 years experience in the field. She has worked white collar crimes, Ponzi schemes and is a certified hostage negotiator. Vicki has also done undercover work and his work numerous crimes against children including missing kids and child exploitation. She currently works as a public affairs agent in the Cleveland FBI office, but her educational background isn't in criminal justice. It's in diagnostic and interventional psychology. Welcome to the program, Vicki Anderson.

Vicki Anderson ([01:24](#)):

Thank you very much. It's nice to be here.

Janet Maltbie ([01:26](#)):

Did you think when you completed that master's program, was it always your intention to become an FBI agent?

Vicki Anderson ([01:33](#)):

It wasn't. It was a thought of mine. It was something that I thought, yeah, that'd be kind of cool, but I don't think I ever really put it into, you know, the process until I was about 26. I was always torn between the criminal world and people with disabilities. So I did a lot of work with people with autism

and a research grant from the centers for disease control, looking at stress levels and families and kids with autism and behavior problems, and then I went to the FBI.

Janet Maltbie ([02:04](#)):

You wouldn't think that a degree in psychology would help you get into the FBI, but people enter the career with a lot of different degrees.

Vicki Anderson ([02:11](#)):

You can almost bring any degree to the FBI, you know when you get into theater and things like that. No, but we have all walks of life with the FBI. We have former teachers, we have former law enforcement, we have two PhD microbiologists in our division right now.

Janet Maltbie ([02:29](#)):

So you need a degree. It needs to be at least a four year bachelor's degree and in something you enjoy with a few years of working experience.

Vicki Anderson ([02:36](#)):

I always try to tell people, study something that's relevant that you enjoy because then you will get out into your field because we require work experience before you come to be an FBI agent.

Janet Maltbie ([02:48](#)):

Okay, so you cannot just graduate with a degree and then expect to get hired?

Vicki Anderson ([02:53](#)):

No, no. You have to have that work experience. It has to be full time and it has to be relevant work. And I don't mean this derogatory in any sense, but you can't be a taxi cab driver. You can't be a waitress. And count that as work experience. You know, we're looking for leadership responsibility, being able to be flexible, those kinds of things. And you've got to demonstrate that when you get to your interview process. I try to tell people to do stuff that they enjoy, study what they enjoy so they'll excel in their first job. Because when you get to the FBI and you get to the interview process, it's all about bragging about what you've done and the success you've had.

Janet Maltbie ([03:32](#)):

So what are the other requirements for the job? I asked Vicki if being an agent is different from what you see on the TV or in movies.

Vicki Anderson ([03:39](#)):

It's unbelievably different. I think the movies and TV really portray us like we work 24 hours a day. We have messed up families. We can't be there at our kids' events, things like that because work is always going on. I'm not saying that that doesn't happen on occasion, but there are so many people in the Bureau. If my daughter has something going on that night and I just can't be there, it's amazing. Somebody can step into my spot and they can do my spot. So I think that the movies really do us a disservice when it comes to those kinds of things. And that we're so stressed out. We all become alcoholics, you know, because we have to go have a drink at the bar because we've had such a stressful

day. I'm not saying they're not stressful days, but it's a job. You know, most things that the FBI do are planned. You know, I know who's getting arrested in three weeks from now.

Janet Maltbie ([04:31](#)):

So you can have a life and you need a degree, but there are things that might prevent you from becoming an agent. Things like out of control debt, drugs in line.

Vicki Anderson ([04:31](#)):

New Speaker ([04:42](#)):

We can't have individuals that have some kind of criminal record and you would be amazed at the people that try to apply. And it's real important at this age, you're making life decisions now. So, you know, keep your nose clean, pay your bills. We can't have people that have bad credit that could be compromised for information. You have top security clearance. You have to be able to pass that background check. And then once you have your top security clearance, we can't have people that are so far in debt that they can be compromised. So we do background checks, we do credit checks to make sure that people are seeing up on their bills and they're not living way outside their means. We're not saying people don't come out with debt. Of course, you know, the school loans, everybody has school loans, but you just need to pay them, stay up to date on those.

Janet Maltbie ([05:31](#)):

Um, drugs.

Vicki Anderson ([05:32](#)):

Yes, that is something that we ask about. We have a strict drug policy. There is some experimentation that is allowed if you have smoked weed, you have done that. You know, we're not saying you're out of the pool of applicants. You just need to look at that drug policy. And once you start that application process, you can't be engaging in those activities. So it has been a coming through the applicant pool. We've had individuals sit there and tell us, I tried, weed two times, they get ready to get hooked up to the polygraph machine and they admit it might've been 50 times and you know, so they're wasting our time. They're taking up a spot. You are going to get polygraphed on the information that you submit. It's all about you. So you shouldn't have a problem in line, you know, unless you've been untruthful on your application.

Janet Maltbie ([06:22](#)):

Given all we've said so far, you may be wondering if it's all worth it. What are the benefits and why are people drawn to this profession?

Vicki Anderson ([06:30](#)):

I think when you know that you've helped a victim out by taking a bad guy off the street, there's nothing more rewarding than that. Knowing the individuals that hurt children, individuals that have abducted a child or exploited a child to know that they're never going to do that again is very rewarding. And even when you know it's an elderly person that's been scammed out of their life savings, I mean I could go on and on. There's so many of those situations that we've helped out in that most people don't know. And

it's very rewarding knowing that you've done that, you've been a part of that. Um, we make a good salary. We can have a very nice living based on our salary that we make as an agent. You get a government car too, you're expected to respond at any time. You're expected to be on call 24 hours a day. Do we work 24 hours a day? No, we kind of covered that.

Janet Maltbie (07:27):

Okay, so somebody that's listening right now thinking, okay, I'm thinking I'm might want to be interested. Can they just call the Bureau and say, Hey, I'd like to come in for a tour. Is that a possibility?

Vicki Anderson (07:38):

What I would say to someone is, if you're really interested, look at our website, read it thoroughly, learn everything you can because a lot of information is on there. That way you're calling and you seem knowledgeable and you're not just asking dumb questions. You know that you've actually done your research. You know, we do get random calls. It's not like you can come walk through our office. We do give tours occasionally if there's like a group, if you're with a certain group and we do a check on everybody and they're escorted.

Janet Maltbie (08:09):

So the best thing to do is to do a little bit of research.

Vicki Anderson (08:12):

Absolutely.

Janet Maltbie (08:13):

Go on fbi.gov correct. I believe.

Vicki Anderson (08:15):

Yeah, go to fbi.gov it will take you, if you go into what we investigate, read everything. And then if you go to FBI jobs.gov then it would tell you what positions are available and open. But a lot of that information is already on our fbi.gov page. Uh, so they really should become familiar with that because there's all kinds of possibilities with the FBI. You know, if you're not interested in being an agent and carrying a gun, we have so many different possibilities through our professional staff branch of the Bureau that it's endless. I mean, our cars don't go out to anybody, you know, they, we have our own mechanic for goodness sakes. We have surveillance specialists, we have accountants, we have analysts. It's really amazing. I think some people think, Ooh, I can't carry a gun. So I don't want to look at the FBI. There's all kinds of positions.

Janet Maltbie (09:02):

Vicki Anderson, thank you so much. Thank you. Is there anything else that you think our students should know?

Vicki Anderson (09:10):

Don't discount it. Learn more. Don't think I can't do it because here's it's a girl from West Virginia. Uh, I had no idea about the FBI that did it. Uh, so don't discount it. Learn, read, and check it out. It's a great career.

Janet Maltbie ([09:27](#)):

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